

JIMMY  
QUIGG  
OFFICE  
BOY

HAROLD S. LATHAM

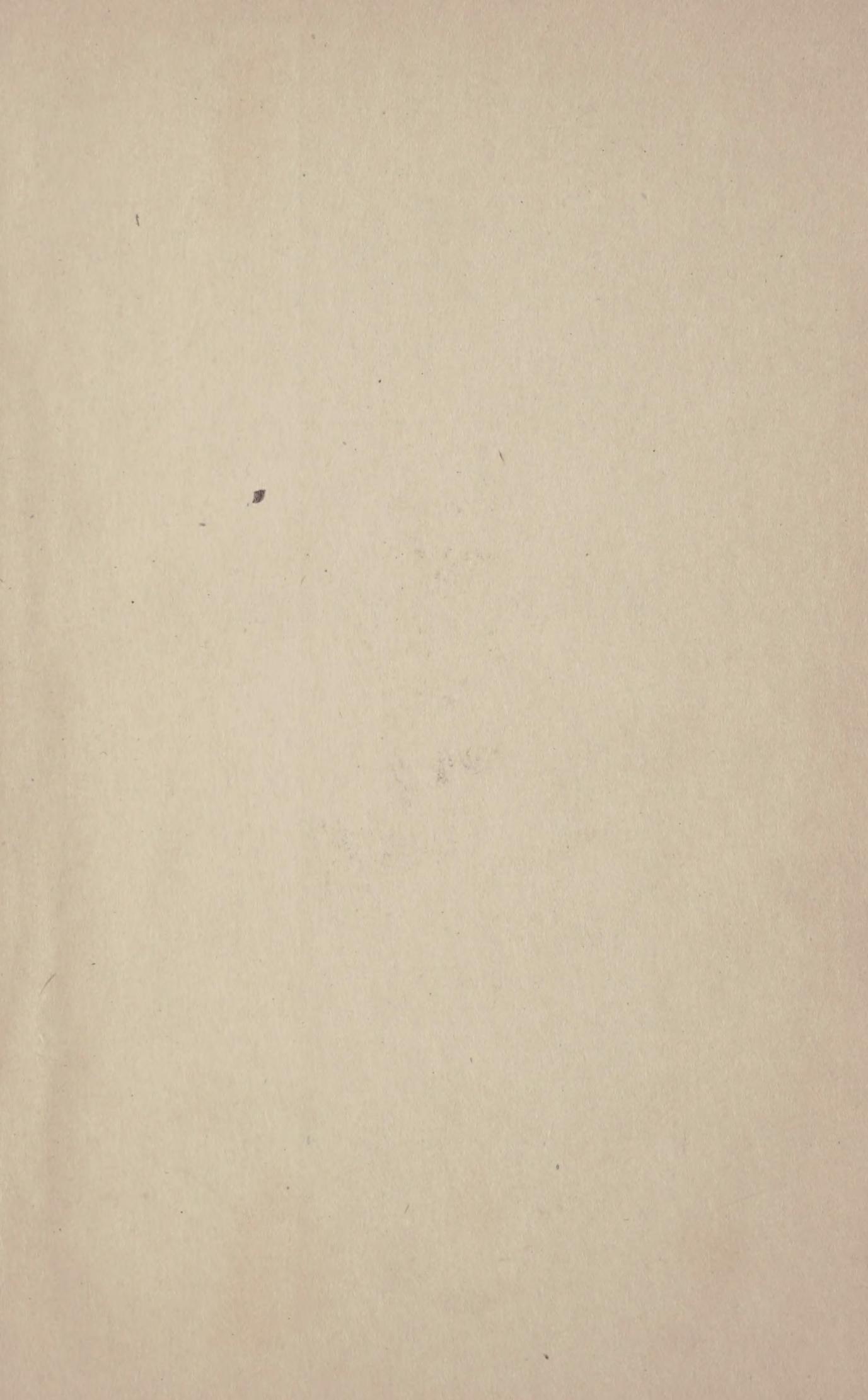


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JIMMY QUIGG, OFFICE BOY

*Other Books for Boys*

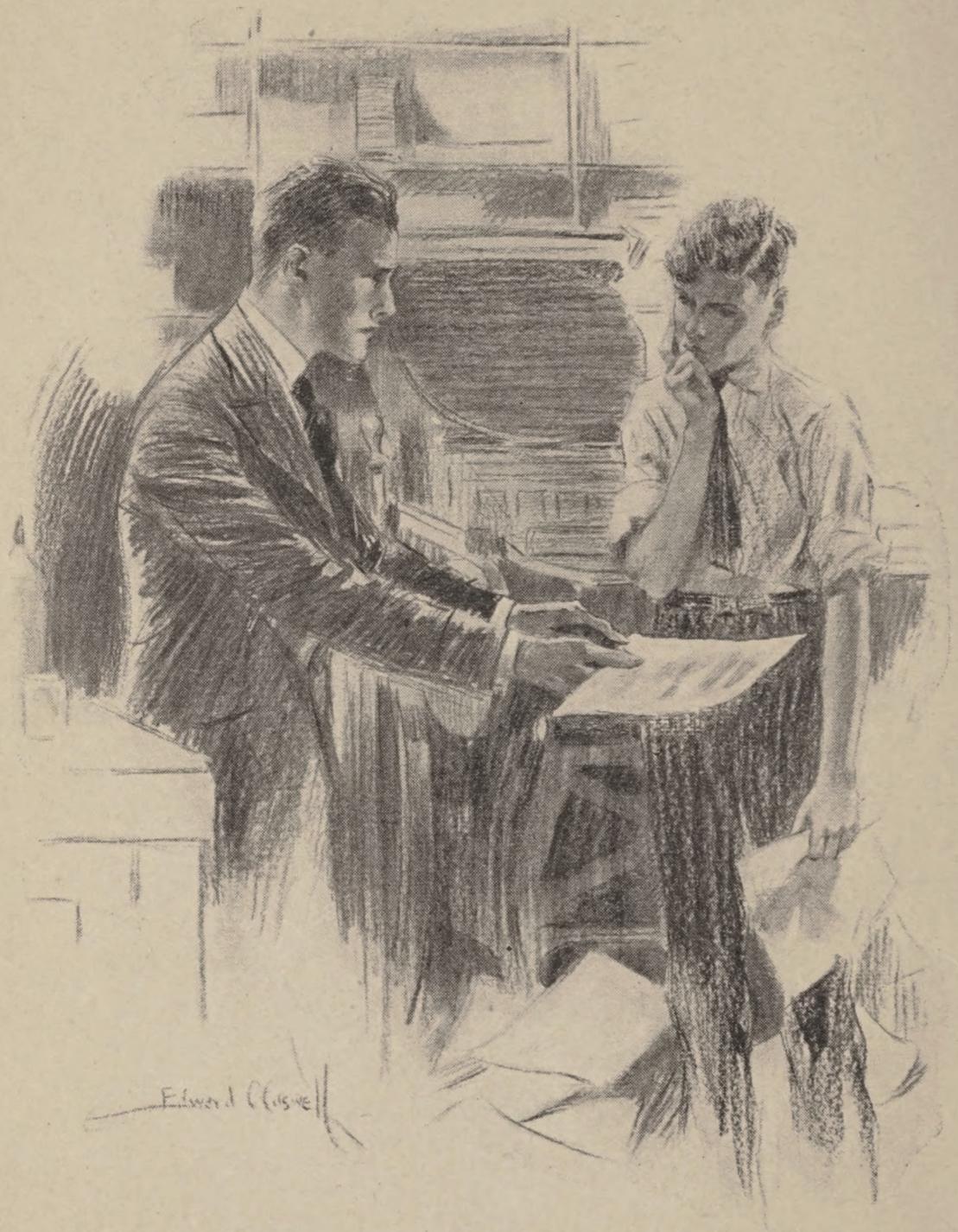
BY

HAROLD S. LATHAM

UNDER ORDERS

MARTY LENDS A HAND





Bertrand pointed disgustedly to the side which Jimmy was  
printing

# Jimmy Quigg, Office Boy

BY

HAROLD S. LATHAM

Author of "Marty Lends a Hand,"  
"Under Orders," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

EDWARD C. CASWEL



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TO THE MEMORY  
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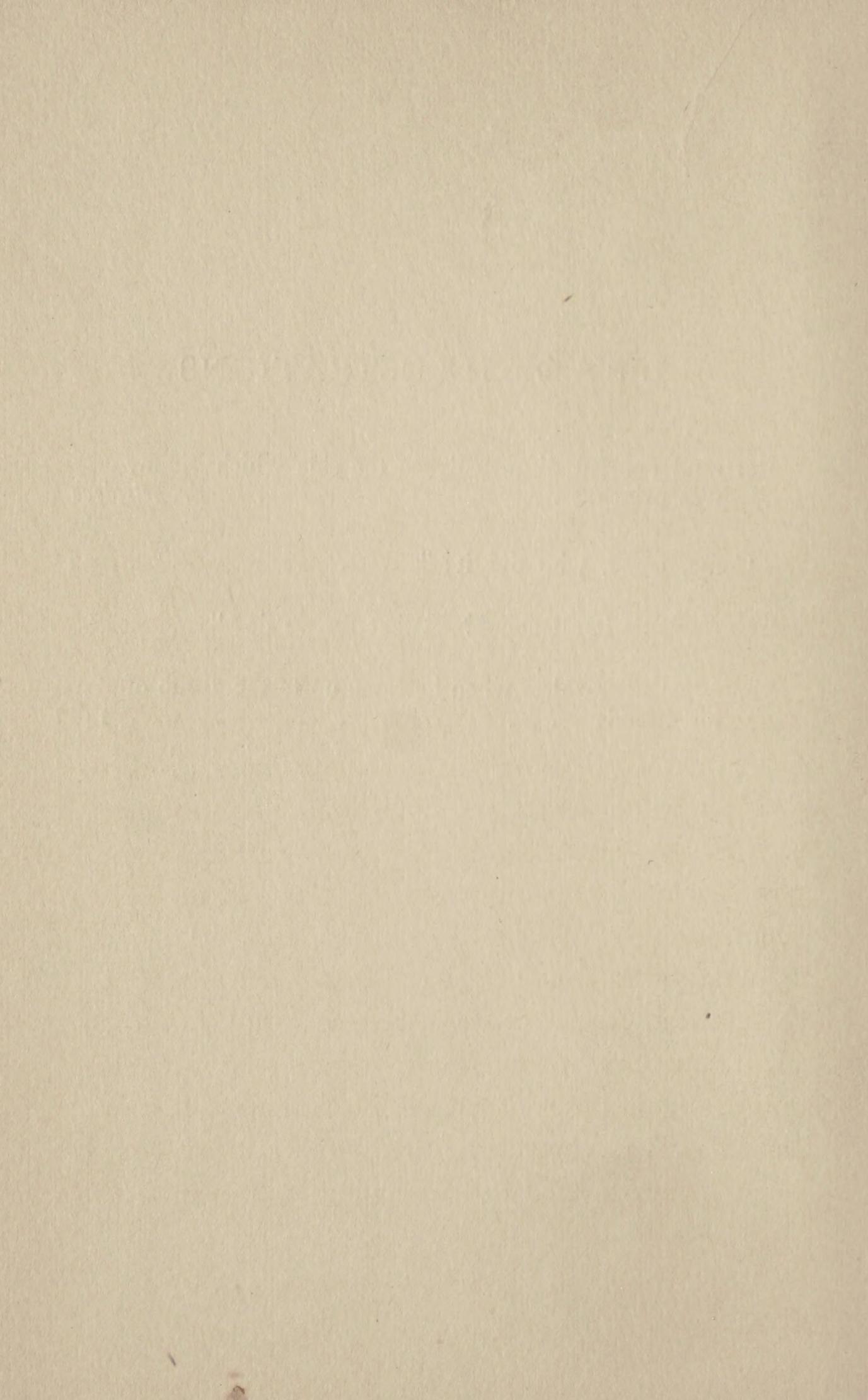
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# JIMMY QUIGG, OFFICE BOY

## CHAPTER I

### JIMMY FINDS HIS JOB

JIMMY QUIGG was in search of a job — it was to be his first job. To be sure he had worked during school vacations, and one year he had even “clerked”—to use a dignified word that hardly fitted the task of general helper in the corner grocery — after school hours and Saturdays. Employment such as this, however, did not really count; he was now seeking a regular job, all the day and the year round.

Jimmy was fourteen, but he might have been, so far as appearances went, sixteen. He was tall, slight, and dark of complexion, and his long face was topped by a bushy head of black hair. It was Jimmy's eyes, however, that one noticed first. They always seemed to be laughing with you or at

you, more frequently the latter, perhaps, than the former. Jimmy in all his days had never seen anything that had changed him from the conviction that life and fun were synonymous — and this despite the fact that money was scarce in the Quigg household and hardships better known there than comforts. Somehow he had the faculty, not of courting adversity but of making the best of it when it came along. And so it was on this particular June morning when he set out from his home, a crowded four-room flat buried in the middle of a dingy tenement in the neighborhood of Washington Square, and proceeded up Fifth Avenue on a journey that, in the eyes of youth, ends at the foot of the rainbow and the pot of gold.

Jimmy's mother had objected strenuously to his going to work; she had wanted him to have a good education. Her wishes had been respected until the home situation had become critical. The little life insurance which Mr. Quigg had left at his death some years before was used up, and the money which she was able to earn as a seamstress was barely enough to buy food. Came a day when she had to dispose, at a loss, of her one tiny Liberty Bond to

pay the landlord. That was too much for Jimmy. He insisted that it was his duty to get a job and to take care of her, and she had finally wearily consented to his leaving school at the end of the summer term.

"But what are you going to do?" she had asked a dozen times since that morning now several weeks past, and "What are you going to do?" she had asked again that very day as he set out on his quest.

"I haven't decided yet," he had answered. "All the big financiers are waiting for me to call on them. I'll take up with the best of them;" with that he had left her.

But her question rang in his ears all the way up the avenue. What *was* he going to do? He hadn't the remotest idea. He knew that in this big, teeming metropolis there must be work for him, work that would pay good money, and he would find it. It had been his thought to obtain employment within walking distance of his home and thereby save car fares, so almost at once he began to scrutinize each of the office buildings that he came to with a view of determining its "job" possibilities. He hated to make the break. He did not know that in almost

any one of them he would have found a welcome, for just then boys were a scarcity in the business world.

His eyes were finally caught and held by two large plate-glass windows, behind which were displayed books, and above which gold letters, running across the front of the building, proclaimed that "The Berrington Publishing Company" was housed there.

Why not try here? A book house wouldn't be at all bad. He studied the window. If he could only show a knowledge of the business he would certainly land a job. Armed with a suggestion as to what he could do the chances would be very much better for him, he reasoned, than they would be if he applied for that great general thing — work.

But he hadn't an idea; he didn't know how books were made or sold! He was just about to turn away, lacking the courage to enter the fearsome-looking building, when he noticed the pattern which his fingers had absent-mindedly traced on the dirty window glass.

"It's a wonder they wouldn't wash their windows once in a while," he muttered — and then he knew what he could do.

Bravely he opened the door and walked in.

"I'd like to see the manager," he said to the advancing clerk, a boy hardly older than himself.

"What do you want, a job?" the clerk responded. Jimmy nodded.

"Ask for Mr. Owens, sixth floor. I don't know whether he's got anything or not," the clerk looked important, "but he'll probably see you. Ever been in the publishing business before?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Bet it's your first job," Jimmy's inquisitor continued, "is it?" Jimmy agreed that it was.

"Can always tell 'em. Well, you've got to begin some time, I suppose."

Jimmy turned to the elevator and a moment later was stepping off into a reception room which, in his mental confusion, seemed filled with girls whose chatter mingled strangely with the click of typewriters.

One of these girls got up from her desk and came toward him.

Jimmy couldn't have told you a thing about her five minutes later except that she had smiled and had ushered him to a seat and had told him to wait until she found the manager. But there was something about her that had left a decidedly pleasant impres-

sion, and that had put him more at ease than he had been since his talk with the lad below.

In a quarter of an hour, though it seemed much longer than that to Jimmy, Mr. Owens appeared. He sat down at Jimmy's side and leaned toward him confidentially.

"Want a job, boy? What can you do? What kind of a job do you want? How old are you? Where have you worked before? How much did you get? Why did you leave?"

Jimmy gulped and decided that the damaging truth might as well be known at once. "I've—I've never worked before; I'm just beginning."

"Oh, ho!" Mr. Owens looked more interested and his eyes rapidly ran over the trim figure. "Never worked, eh? That's good! And what makes you think you'd like to take up the publishing business? How did you happen to come in here? What do you think you can do for us?"

"I think I could wash your windows and dust off the books displayed in 'em."

"What?" Mr. Owens snapped.

Jimmy continued bravely: "I don't think your store window looks very nice. I'm sure I could

clean it up a lot and keep it clean and do other things besides."

"Well, I never!" Mr. Owens ejaculated. "You don't like our windows and think you could improve them. Humph! You'll do, boy, you'll do."

"You mean you'll take me?"

"Yes."

"When do I begin?"

"At once."

"All — all right." Jimmy rose somewhat uncertainly. "Shall I start in on the windows?"

"No, we'll get the cleaners after that." Mr. Owens made a mental note to speak to the store manager about his careless window dressing.

"Please, one more thing," with evident embarrassment; "how much do I get?"

"How much do you think you're worth?"

Jimmy's buoyancy was coming back. "I think I'm worth about twenty dollars a week, but if I get half of it I might be able to get along."

"Ten dollars it is, then."

"All right," Jimmy assented. "And — what do you call my job?"

"Call it? Why, office boy, I guess."

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST DAY

JAMES QUIGG, President of the Berrington Company, or maybe the Quigg Publishing Company — that's what it was going to be some day. Jimmy had just resolved it. It was Jimmy Quigg, office boy, now, but you had to begin as an office boy to be a good president. Everybody knows that. It wouldn't be long — ten years perhaps at the most — before he would be sitting in a big room before a shiny mahogany desk pushing buttons and ordering around the little creatures who answered his summons — *his* summons. Jimmy's mind was made up on that.

This pleasant reverie was rudely interrupted by the buzz of the bell. He hurried to the indicator. Number three was ringing. Consulting a crumpled slip of paper he learned that number three was Mr. Grayson of the manufacturing department, but who and where was Mr. Grayson? He hadn't the slight-

est idea, and there wasn't anybody around to ask; the other two boys had gone out to lunch. He didn't think that they should have left him alone on his very first day. The bell buzzed again, long and insistently.

Well, he would make a blind stab at it. Headlong he flung himself at the first door, opened it, and stepped in. Instantly he realized his mistake. At the desk before him was the august individual who had been pointed out to him as the president. He tried to retreat, but a voice stopped him:

“Well, boy?”

“Excuse me, sir, I got in the wrong office; I was looking for Mr. Grayson.”

The much-to-be-feared man nodded his head. “Third door down to the left,” he said and went back to his writing.

With that Jimmy escaped. He found Grayson irritable. “What's the matter? Didn't you hear that bell? Been ringing it for ten minutes.”

“Sorry, but — I had to find out where you were.”

“Um — well you know now, don't forget next time. Here's a package of proofs for Kendall in the editorial department. Know where that is?

Floor below, right under this office. Step lively."

When Jimmy got back from Mr. Kendall's office, number one was ringing and then number five and then three again. He was indeed having a busy day. He didn't know, until the next morning, that two boys were always supposed to be in that room to attend to the bells and to take care of the needs of visitors and that it was only because Miss Harris was absent, that Ben Smith and Fred Garson were able to steal away to luncheon at the same time, leaving everything to a new boy. Miss Harris, it developed, was the elegant lady who ruled in the outer office, keeping the boys in order and extending courtesy to the company's guests.

Jimmy had just got back from call number six when Ben and Fred came in. They looked at him from the superior height of old employees, and Fred inquired solicitously, "Everything gone all right?"

"Yep, been awful busy."

Jimmy did not catch the amused smile that passed between Ben and Fred as he said this. "All the numbers seemed to want something and they all wanted it at once," he added.

“Let ‘em ring. Take your time answering ‘em. You should be bothered! Can’t do any more than keep moving. Well, you can go out to lunch now.” Fred dismissed him royally.

“Isn’t there any place here where I can eat my lunch?”

“Eat your lunch here! You don’t mean to say you brought your own food! Never do that! You can get good grub over at Don Carlo’s Café; all you want for a quarter.”

“But why can’t I bring my own?”

“You can if you want to, only none of us do it. Go down to the third floor, to the back, and you’ll find a room with some boxes in it. You can eat down there, I suppose. Wait, I’ll go down with you. You watch the bells up here, Ben.”

“Well, don’t be long,” Ben objected. “I can’t be tending ‘em alone.”

Fred led Jimmy downstairs and through a dark passage that wound around between stacks of books to a small room, in which there were several big cases and which was light and pleasant.

“This is all right,” Jimmy said. “They won’t find any fault if I eat in here, will they?”

"Naw, they never come here much, anyhow. It's a good place to sneak down to if you ever want to get away for a little rest. I come down here," and he looked about surreptitiously, "for a cigarette once in a while. Do you smoke?"

Jimmy had deposited himself on a box and was untying a somewhat mussy-looking brown package. "No," he answered, biting into a substantial sandwich.

Fred showed no inclination to depart. "Well, I don't smoke myself so awful much, but you know how it is. How old are you?"

"Be fifteen in two months. How old are you?" Jimmy returned.

"Sixteen my next birthday."

"Thought you was older than that."

"Yes," proudly, "I think I do look pretty near twenty. It's the way I dress, and then I've been working and dealing with men so long, don't you know."

"Yes," Jimmy agreed. And then for want of anything better he asked, "Do you like it here?"

"Sure; it's all right. If you know how to man-

age you don't have to do awful much. Watch me, kid, and you'll get a few ideas."

"But I should think you'd just about as soon be busy as to hang around with nothing to do."

"It ain't that," Fred interrupted. "You don't want to let 'em put anything over on you. That's the thing to watch out for. We got a club over near where I live of fellows that work, and we discuss all these things."

"A club?"

"Yes, Office Boys' League, we call it. I'll have to take you round some time."

"Thanks; I'd like to go."

"Sure it's only by mixing with the bunch that you get to understand what's what. Well, I must be going upstairs. Most like old Benny is having a fit. You've got forty minutes of your noon hour left yet and you want to take it all. Don't ever come back to work before your time's up. Don't do you any good and 'tain't good for us. See?"

Fred left Jimmy with a new train of thought — that it wasn't nearly so simple being an office boy as it seemed on the surface. There were, evidently, all sorts of problems to be encountered and a definite code to be lived up to.

## CHAPTER III

### “THE BIG IDEA”

THOUGH it was “Jimmy Quigg, office boy” who left the Berrington Publishing Company shortly after five o’clock that night, it was “Jimmy Quigg, business man” who arrived home half an hour or so later. He was quite out of breath when he burst through the hall door after his climb up the three flights of stairs, and it was difficult for him to look dignified — though he made a brave effort.

His mother was in the kitchen standing over a steaming dish. She turned expectantly.

“Well, son, how did it go? Have you got a job? I suppose you have or you would have been home before this.”

Jimmy tried to answer with proper restraint, but he was too eager to tell the news. “Yes, I’m with the Berrington Publishing Company and I get ten

dollars a week. I answer the bells and do errands and paste up bills in big books, and it's going to be lots of fun. If I stick to the work and try hard, Mr. Owens,— he's the man who hires you — says he'll put me down in the advertising department where they have printing presses and I can set the type and — ”

“ Not so fast, boy, one thing at a time. But first you help me get supper on the table. We can talk as we eat. You must be hungry.”

Jimmy turned to the shelves which lined one side of the kitchen, and taking down the plates and saucers placed them on the table while his mother dished up the contents of the kettle.

“ And now,” Mrs. Quigg began, when they were seated, “ tell me all about it,” — and Jimmy, missing no detail, recounted his day’s experiences.

After supper, when the dishes had been done and while Mrs. Quigg was “ taking a hand at a bit of ironing,” they still talked of the great adventure on which Jimmy had set out — business.

“ Some day, mother, I’ll be a salesman or a book-keeper or something and make a lot of money and then we can live in a nice house and have servants

and everything, but ten dollars isn't so awful bad to begin on, do you think?"

"It's fine, boy," Mrs. Quigg said proudly, "and I don't think we need worry about a new home. We're pretty comfortable here."

"Sure, I didn't mean that," Jimmy was quick to protest. He looked around the little room with its simple furnishings. "Suits me, but I thought maybe you'd like something fancier."

"I tell you what," Mrs. Quigg said, beginning to indulge in daydreams of her own, "I'd rather have something to ride in on a Sunday than a fancier house. I always thought it was awful nice when people could go a-riding on Sunday afternoons out in the parks and in the country. When I was a girl and lived on a farm that's what we used to do — go out with the horse and buggy."

Jimmy was silent for a moment. "If it's riding you want to go, we'll fix it," he said at length, and almost as he said it he had "the big idea." It came upon him with such force that he almost exclaimed aloud, but he shut his lips tight and thought and at the end of his thinking came resolution and action.

"Think I'll run down and get the rolls for break-

fast. Anything else you want me to do before I come back?"

"No, I guess not," replied Mrs. Quigg, surprised at this unusual solicitude. She usually had to ask him several times to get the rolls.

It took Jimmy only about five minutes to go to the baker's, but it was nearly an hour before he returned, his face aglow with excitement.

The days wore on. Jimmy walked to work each morning fresh and eager and returned each night a bit tired, but happy and fairly bubbling over with accounts of his own doings and those of his associates. He did not say very much about Fred Garrison, and yet Fred was the one with whom he had the most to do and about whom he was, perhaps, thinking the most. Sometimes he wondered if Fred were taking advantage of him, as, for example, when he left him to answer all the bells and do all the errands while he stamped invoices, stoutly maintaining, in the face of Jimmy's protest, that the invoices were the most important and that he knew best how to take care of them. Jimmy could not deny this, and yet he knew, too, that Fred did not

choose the invoices because of any interest in his employer's welfare! But again Fred's apparent friendliness would quite disarm him of his suspicions.

He was going through one of these periods of doubt when Fred came up to him — it was Thursday afternoon — and clapped him on the back as he stood at his table arranging bills in alphabetical order.

"Say, kid, don't you want to come over to the club Sunday afternoon? We've got some sort of a shindig on. I'd like to have you meet the bunch."

Jimmy looked up, his suspicions vanishing into thin air.

"Sorry; I'd like to, but I've got something else doing."

"Aw, shake it. You can come if you want to," Fred urged.

"No," . . . Jimmy hesitated, . . . "you see," . . . he hesitated again. For some reason or other he questioned the wisdom of telling Fred of his plans. But then, why shouldn't he? "You see," he repeated, "I'm taking my mother riding."

"What's the matter, is she sick?"

Now that he had begun, Jimmy hurried on with his explanation. "No, but she's always wanted to go riding Sundays in the park and I found a man with a horse and carriage who'd take us all the afternoon for three dollars and I hired him."

"That's a funny idea. Nobody much rides in carriages. Why didn't you get an auto?"

"Costs too much. Don't you want to go out with us Sunday? There'll be room enough for three. There's only my mother and me."

"I don't want to. Thanks though." There was a touch of scorn in Fred's refusal. "I don't care nothing about riding in parks; that's for ladies" — and Fred walked away.

Though Jimmy would probably not have admitted it, Fred's refusal of his invitation took away some of the pleasure that he had experienced in making his Sunday plans. He had thought that he was going to give his mother a real treat. Now he began to wonder if, after all, it had been a foolish idea. He supposed that he could tell the little old cabman who kept his horse and ancient vehicle in the livery stable not far from his home that he didn't want him, but he had definitely hired him and —

Well, he guessed he'd go through with it now that he had started.

"I think it's a perfectly lovely thing, your going riding that way," a voice near him said, and turning, Jimmy looked into the face of the girl who had smiled so pleasantly at him that first day. "I heard you and Fred talking."

"Oh, do you think she'll like it, Helen?" Jimmy asked eagerly.

"I am sure she will; I would."

"Say, you wouldn't — you wouldn't," Jimmy grew very red, "you wouldn't want to go with us, would you?"

"With you and your mother, Sunday? Why I'd love to, but of course I didn't mean that when I said I'd like it."

"I know you didn't, but there's that extra seat and, if you want to, why come along."

"I'd be real pleased," Helen said.

Sunday dawned clear and brilliant, just such a morning as Jimmy would have selected had he had the power of selection. Still, he kept his secret. His mother went the usual round of her household

tasks unconscious of the great event that was so near at hand. About eleven o'clock Jimmy suggested that they have their dinner a little early — "So that we can be through by half past twelve. I've got something I want to do this afternoon."

Mrs. Quigg said nothing, but wondered what had got into the boy. He had acted not at all like himself for the past day or so and one thing especially worried her. When he had given her the money from his first week's work he had said, "Here's only seven dollars this week, mother. I had an obligation I had to meet. I'll tell you about it some time."

What obligation could he have had that she knew nothing of? And yet there was something in his reserved manner that warned her not to ask too many questions.

But she had dinner early as he had suggested; they were all through and the dishes washed and put away before one o'clock. Shortly after that hour there was a pounding on the door. Jimmy hurried to open it. His cabman was there. Jimmy quickly stepped out and shut the door behind him.

"Wait down on the street, we'll be ready in a

minute," he whispered. Then he returned to his mother.

"Now, mother," he said, his eyes shining excitedly, "we're going for a Sunday ride. Get your hat."

"Ride! What do you mean?"

"Never mind, just get your hat and hurry, because we are losing what's being paid for."

Mrs. Quigg was very much perplexed, but she obeyed and soon she was being ushered down the stairs and out of the building.

At the curb, surrounded by a crowd of curious children, was a remarkable equipage, belonging to another time — an open carriage of the victoria type drawn by a horse almost as ancient as the vehicle itself. But neither Jimmy nor Mrs. Quigg noticed the signs of age in wagon or animal.

"Jimmy!" Mrs. Quigg exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

"It means we're going to spend the afternoon in the park."

Mrs. Quigg's eyes filled. "But you shouldn't," she expostulated. She knew now where the three dollars had gone.

"Why, don't you like it?"

"Like it! Why, of course, but ——"

"Well, then, come on." And with that he led her down the steps to the curb. With great politeness he assisted her to a seat, then got in himself and sat down opposite her.

"Helen's going to sit with you," he said.

"Helen?"

"Yes, she's one of the office girls. We're to stop for her at Nineteenth Street. She said she'd be waiting there. Now, then, up Fifth Avenue, please, to Central Park," he instructed the driver. "Isn't this a nice surprise?" he asked, settling back in the worn, but still comfortable, cushions.

"Wonderful," his mother answered.

With that they were off, followed by the admiring and envious glances of many pairs of eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

### RED INK

SUCH a ride as it was! The queer-looking vehicle made its way slowly up the crowded thoroughfare, winding cautiously in and out among fine automobiles, but giving quite as much pleasure to the three people it carried as though it were the latest model of some manufacturer of twin sixes. Eager eyes took in the view, first of tall buildings and later of the green grass and trees and bushes in the park. It seemed to Jimmy, who occasionally took shy glances at his mother, that she was already looking more rested than she had for weeks and that the longer they rode the younger she grew.

The next morning Helen Platt characterized the occasion to the two or three girls of the Berrington forces with whom she chummed as "a swell affair. It was lots more fun than riding in a street car or an automobile, or — or anything, except an airplane, I guess," she concluded.

"You ought to have taken some lunch," one of the girls suggested.

"We did. Jimmy had that all fixed up with me. That was what I contributed, and when we came to a nice spot in the park we stopped and got out and ate it."

"Humph!" snorted Fred, who had joined the group. "Riding in carriages and eating in parks! Who wants to do that?"

"Just because you don't, is no sign nobody doesn't want to," Helen retorted. "I'll bet we had a nicer time than you did."

"I wasn't spending my time in kid's play anyhow." Fred turned away in disdain.

But, though Jimmy had no doubt as to the success of his Sunday's ride so far, at least, as his mother and Helen were concerned, he did feel a little troubled that Fred so disapproved of it. Did Fred, after all, represent mature masculine judgment? Was it a thing to be scorned to go riding in the park? The doubt was the one fly in the amber of his enjoyment.

He followed Fred.

"Your party went off all right, did it?" he asked.

"Sure, some doings. But I don't suppose you'd be interested. It's so different from what you do."

"That's no reason for thinking I wouldn't like it. I like all kinds of things."

"Do you? I thought maybe you only liked sort of sissy things. As far as anything I've seen, that'd be about your style."

Jimmy flushed. "I don't call it sissy to go out with your mother."

"No, 'tisn't, unless that's all you do. If a fellow's going to be a man he's got to go out with fellows."

"Sure, 'n' I do."

"Well, then, we'll call it square, 'til the next time, but when I ask you again to go to my club you'd better go, 'cause if you don't you won't get another invite."

"I'll go all right, all right."

Throughout the day and for several days this conversation rankled in Jimmy's mind. Fred maintained his reserved attitude as though Jimmy were still on trial, and Jimmy longed for an opportunity to prove his worth! That opportunity came before the week was out.

Jimmy and Fred and Ben Smith were sitting, at the time, at the little table in the outer hall where the office boys sat when there was nothing for them to do and, having no occupation, their minds were intent on stirring up excitement.

"Tell you what would be an awful fine joke," Fred said in whispers, "but I wouldn't dare do it. You know those glass soap bowls they've got in the wash room, those that hold liquid soap and you press down on the spout and they shoot some of the soap out on your hands?"

The boys nodded.

"Well," Fred went on, "suppose you was to take out the plug and put in with the soap just a little red ink ——" Fred paused to watch the effect of his words.

The three boys looked at each other and laughed.

"Wouldn't you just die to see old Mr. Grayson go in to wash up his little paddies, oh, so clean, and have him get a nice bath of red ink when he expected something else?"

"Gee, I'd love it! But I'd be afraid to do it," Ben admitted.

Jimmy hesitated. "Pugh! Doing it ain't

nothing. I'd just as soon do it," he said with a bravado he far from felt, "but — but —"

"But what?" snapped Fred.

And that added the final touch of incentive, that challenging tone in Fred's voice.

"But — but when could you do it? Somebody'd see you," Jimmy finished weakly.

"Oh, that'd be easy enough; it would only take a second. You could watch out and see when the coast was clear."

"Black ink'd be better," Ben suggested.

"No!" Fred objected. "Red ink wouldn't show so much in the dish. Looks kind of like the soap stuff they've got in there now. Black ink'd mess you up more, but red'd be safer."

"I'll do it," Jimmy announced.

"Good! Didn't think you had the spunk!" Fred's words were as music to Jimmy's ears.

About three o'clock that afternoon, when there was a lull in the demands on the office boys, Jimmy's chance came. With a bottle of red ink under his coat he slipped away and succeeded beautifully in his purpose and without detection.

"I put in an awful lot," he said upon his return.

"Made the soap look a little red, but I guess they won't notice it. Maybe they'll think it's just a new kind of soap."

"Did you really put it in?" Even now Fred was suspicious. "Think I'll go and see," which he did, returning a few moments later and confirming Jimmy's report. "You sure did a good job! Gee, I wish I could be on hand when the first splash comes."

"I hope Grayson gets it," Ben said. He seemed to have some grudge against the head of the manufacturing department.

"I—I wonder what they'll do?" Jimmy mused. His mind conjured up all sorts of dreadful penalties.

"Oh, most likely they'll have a grand powwow and make it hot for somebody. But remember," Fred cautioned, "none of us here know anything about it."

"Nobody knows," Ben agreed.

Strange as it may seem, it was Mr. Grayson who first tested the cleansing powers of the liquid-soap dish, and his surprise and astonishment when, after pushing down the plunger several times, he looked at his hand to find it splotched with brilliant red,

knew no bounds. He glared at the offending container, rinsed his hand, and stamped angrily out of the room and to the manager's office.

"Look at that!" He stretched forth his arm, exhibiting a red-stained palm.

"Well?" and Mr. Owens waited.

"Well! I should say well! You know what some rascal has done? Filled the soap containers in the lavatory with red ink." Mr. Grayson waited for the full effect of his words.

Mr. Owens laughed.

"Laugh, do you? 'Tisn't my idea of a joke. What's happened to your discipline?"

With difficulty Mr. Owens controlled himself. "You're quite right, Mr. Grayson. Something must be done about it, of course, but — but just between you and me, it is funny; don't you think so?"

"No, I don't," Mr. Grayson replied emphatically and went back to his own desk.

Mr. Owens turned to his stenographer. "Get all the office boys in here right away."

In five minutes they were there, six of them. They stood embarrassed, awkward, awaiting judg-

ment, some of them at least totally ignorant as to the reason for the summons.

“Boys,” Mr. Owens began seriously, “a joke’s a joke, but business is business and you’ve got to cut out your fooling. I’ve been watching you for some days and unless things get better at once I’ll give the whole crew of you your walking papers. Now, then, what I want to know is, who put red ink in the soap dish in the men’s wash room on this floor?”

There was unbroken silence.

“Come, come, who did it?”

Again no response.

“Very well, then, I’ll get at you one by one.”

Three of the boys were able to prove an alibi at once and were dismissed, leaving Ben, Fred, and Jimmy.

“Garson, how about you? Do you know anything about it?” Mr. Owens snapped.

“No, sir, not a thing,” came the unhesitating reply.

Mr. Owens turned to Jimmy, who was next in line.

Before he asked the question, Jimmy spoke. “Aw, what’s the use? — I did it,” he said sullenly.

"You!" Mr. Owens exclaimed. "Seems to me you're beginning pretty early in your career here, young man. Only been with us about two weeks. All right, you two boys can go. I'll have it out with this lad." Fred and Ben made a hurried exit.

"I'm just a trifle disappointed in you," Mr. Owens said when the two were alone. "I—I thought you were above this sort of thing." He waited for Jimmy to make a reply, but Jimmy was silent.

"Well, haven't you anything to say about it?"

"Nothing to say, is there, except that I did it?"

"No, I suppose not," Mr. Owens agreed. "I'm glad you had the decency to say that. I don't suppose you care about being given another chance. Most of you fellows would just as soon be told to get out as not."

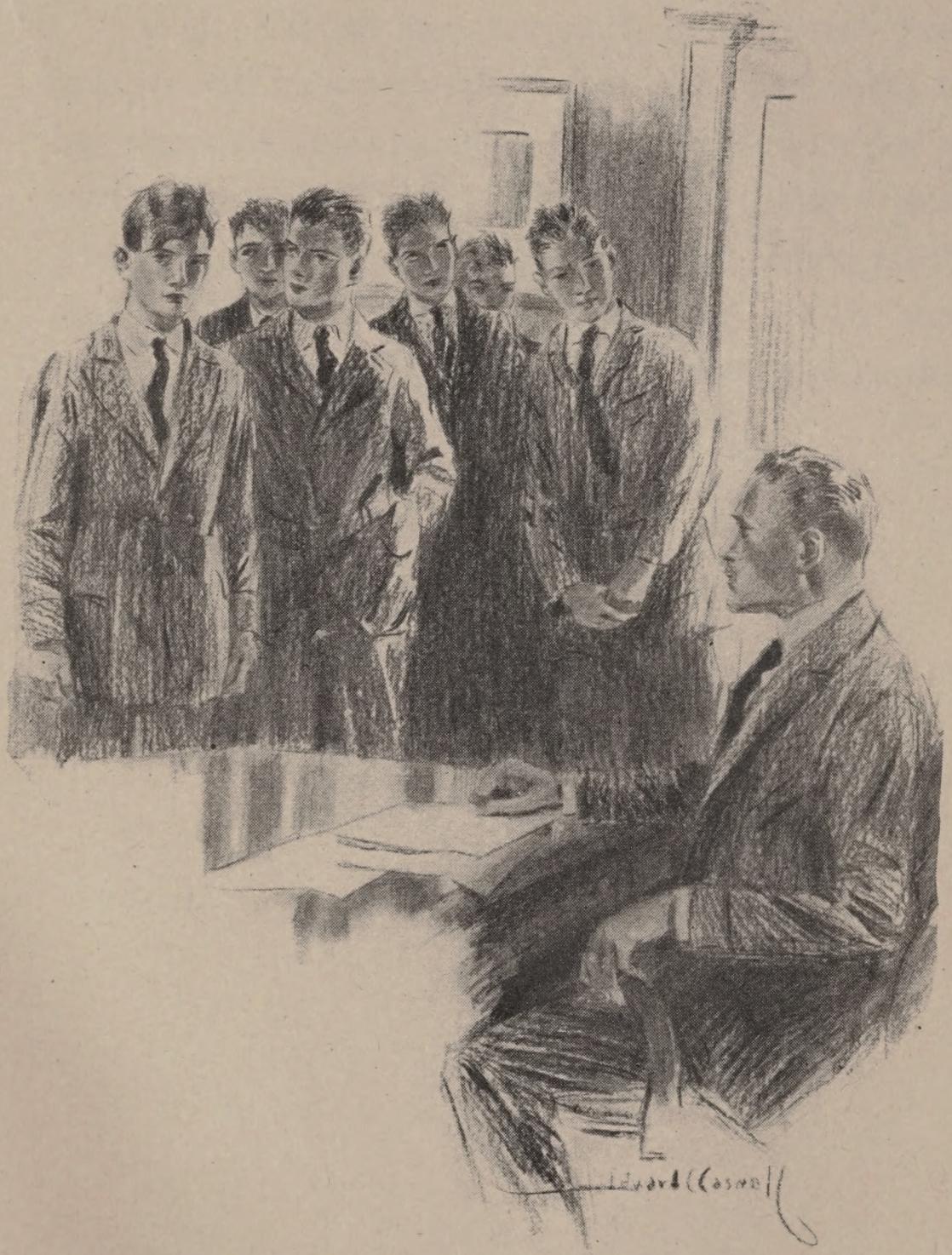
"Oh, no!" Jimmy interrupted.

"What?"

"I—I wish you didn't have to fire me."

"Oh, you do! And I suppose if I don't you won't ever do it again or anything else. You'll be a model little boy."

"I don't know about that, but I'll try."



“Come, come, who did it?”



“ Well, I’ll let you try and, believe me, young man, it will be worth your while. I don’t mind telling you that this morning I had decided to put you into the cashier’s office where you’d have a pretty good chance to work up, but you have killed all that now. I’ll give Garson the job and watch you a little longer to see what sort of stuff you’re made of.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE OFFICE BOYS' LEAGUE

**I**NWARDLY Jimmy rebelled at what he felt was the injustice of it all. "Garson gets promoted and I get the blame," he thought, "and it was Garson that started the thing. Oh, well, what difference does it make? It'll all blow over and be forgotten."

He was careful not to let Fred see that he harbored any ill feeling.

"What'd he say?" Garson asked at the first opportunity. "He didn't fire you, did he?"

"Oh, no, just talked a little wild and ——"

"And you promised to be good," Garson finished the sentence.

"That's about it."

For the next few weeks it almost seemed as though that had been not only Jimmy's promise, but his firm resolve. He answered the bells with such promptness that the various department heads

were at a loss to understand this new type of service. He numbered invoices with a speed hitherto quite unknown in this difficult art. He looked up back orders and dug out hidden correspondence from the files which nobody else had been able to find. In fact he made himself a useful and popular young man.

During his noon hour Jimmy cultivated Fred Garrison. Jimmy continued to bring his lunch, eating it in the stock room as he had on that first day, and here, for the latter part of the hour, usually came Fred.

“Can you come over to the club next Saturday night?” Fred asked on one of these occasions. “Now don’t say you got to stay home with your mother or give any other punk reason.”

“Nope, I can come. What time?”

“About eight. We’re going to have a business meeting first, but that’ll be short and then there’s eats. I’m going right up from here. Probably I’ll get a sandwich or something first, but on club nights I don’t go home, takes too long.”

“Mother wouldn’t like it if I didn’t come home first,” Jimmy ventured.

"Oh, well, you'll have time enough; you live nearer. Alex he don't care whether I ever come home or not."

"Alex?"

"He's the man I live with."

"Don't you live at home with your mother and father?"

"Haven't got any. Alex's a Russian, and when my father died he took me. No great credit to him; he's always made me work hard enough. I haven't got any relations, I guess, over here."

"You a Russian?"

"My father was; Garson wasn't his real name. I made Garson up out of some of the letters that were in his name. I couldn't be bothered with all the fixings it had originally. You'd oughter hear Alex's name. I don't think he knows how to spell it himself. He's some shrewd guy, though."

"What do you mean — in business?"

"No, he don't have much business, any regular business, that is. Says he knows too much for that. He makes quite a lot talking."

"Oh!" Jimmy said, not comprehending the import of Fred's words.

"He's a believer in freedom and liberty and all that. He tries to make people get their rights. Says the poor man's time's coming. That's his pet spiel. Just wait 'til once they get started, they'll rip things to pieces for fair, he says."

"Sounds kind of like a — a socialist or something like that," Jimmy ventured.

"He ain't a socialist. Socialists don't go far enough for Alex. He's a regular fellow. Sometimes I wonder if he ain't right."

Jimmy was too intent on the business of eating homemade apple pie with his fingers to give much thought to this weighty problem. "Maybe," was all he volunteered. Then quickly changing the subject, he asked, "how do you like your new job?"

This was not the first time that he had asked that question in the several weeks that Fred had been working in the cashier's office. A careful observer might have seen in Jimmy's oft-repeated inquiries something more than interest in Fred — a tinge of regret, perhaps, that the job had not been his, and curiosity to know how the lucky candidate was making out.

"I like it," Fred answered. "It's fun being

in where all the money is. I count it, too, sometimes; the cash orders, you know, and last Saturday the cashier let me help him make up the pay roll. I know how much most everybody gets"—importantly. "Well, I got to go now. My time's up. Don't forget about Saturday."

As if Jimmy could forget! Fred reminded him of the engagement every time he saw him for the balance of the week, and Jimmy really needed no reminder. He was quite curious to visit this club of which Fred had spoken so often and in such glowing terms. It was, if Fred's judgment was to be taken, the "open sesame" to business success.

It did not look like any such wonder-working agency, Jimmy thought that Saturday night as he stopped before the building in which it was housed—an unattractive, run-down structure in a street of bygones within hailing distance of Greenwich Village. The upper floors were used for storage purposes. Down three or four stone steps, framed with a rickety railing, was the entrance to the basement, over the doorway of which was lettered in yellow paint, OFFICE BOYS' LEAGUE. At the right of the doorway was a window through the dirty

panes of which Jimmy could see a room full of boys, some little, some big. He hated to go in, but Fred was expecting him. Should he knock, or should he turn the knob? He considered both and then decided to enter without any preliminaries.

Fred was near the door and saw him at once. The meeting was still in progress and Fred motioned Jimmy to a seat beside him.

There were in the room perhaps two dozen boys of varying ages from fifteen to twenty. They were listening to one of the older members, a lanky individual, who was urging upon them the importance of securing better pay for their work.

"We're gittin' six 'n' eight 'n' maybe ten dollars," he shouted nasally, "'n' look what the girls is gittin' for runnin' typewriters. Ain't we as good in any business as the girls? I'll say we are!"

A roar of approval interrupted him, but he went on, undisturbed:

"The boss, he thinks of something to do. We do it 'n' he gits the money. Shouldn't we have a part of what's comin' in? I'll say we should! What'd business offices be without us? How long'd they run if it wasn't for us? They'd be deader 'n a

doornail in 'bout a week. I'll say they would! Who's ready to say he won't work 'nless he gits decent pay? I'll say I am!"

He paused dramatically, but there was silence. Perhaps his hearers could appreciate his oratory, but were loath to act.

"Ain't there nobody ready to fight for their rights?"

Again silence.

"Well, you're just a bunch of boobs, then," he concluded and sat down in disgust.

The president rose. "We're ready to agree something ought to be done," he began, "but we don't know what to do. We can't be in too much of a hurry. Office boys oughta have more pay, but what's the way to go about it? What's the big idea? That's the question."

"Strike!" the first speaker interrupted. "Strike, if you can't git it; that's the way, that's what they're all doin', an' they're gittin' it."

"That would be all right if we all worked in one place," the president went on, "but here we are twenty fellows working at fifteen or eighteen places. What good'd a strike do?"

"Each fellow," answered the boy agitator, "what's a member of this league should start up and organize the fellows in his company. That's easy."

"I think we got to go slow," the president again cautioned. "I'd suggest we appoint a committee to look into it and report at the next meeting."

"This club's always appointing committees. That's all it ever amounts to," came a protest.

Nevertheless that was what was done and the meeting soon adjourned.

Jimmy, who was thoroughly bewildered by the proceedings, was taken by Fred and introduced to a number of his "pals."

"This is Jimmy Quigg," he would say, "my side partner at Berrington's," and Jimmy would awkwardly acknowledge the introduction.

He did not, for some reason, feel drawn to the boys. There was something about Fred — perhaps it was his good looks, perhaps it was his easy assurance, perhaps it was his assumption of a superior business knowledge — that made him like him. But these boys were different. Some of them were sleepy-acting, he thought, and others — he was look-

ing at the moment at a debonair young man smoking a cigarette as he played his hand of cards at a corner table — others he just didn't like!

Jimmy had always been a home boy and there was something in this present atmosphere that had not awakened a responsive chord in him. He was not used to hearing the kind of talk that was being indulged in so freely or to having the kind of thoughts that many of these boys were having. For just one moment he was tempted to cut it all and go home — and then they began to pass around sandwiches and bottles of sarsaparilla and almost before they were through eating Fred was persuading him to try his hand at a game of billiards on the improvised billiard table at the back of the room, and things were easier and he was deciding that it wasn't so bad, after all.

When, shortly before midnight, the party broke up and Jimmy got out into the fresh air and was alone, he was again beset by doubts. He wondered if, after all, that was being a man, acting and thinking in the manner of the boys of the Office Boys' League. Somehow it wasn't quite what he had expected as the first step to manhood and he didn't feel any more "manly" than he had before.

## CHAPTER VI

### PROMOTION

**M**ONDAY morning brought with it a summons for Jimmy to Mr. Owens' office.

"He wants to see you right away," Ben Smith said importantly. "What you been doing — filling up any more soap dishes with ink?"

It was without fear that Jimmy this time walked into Mr. Owens' presence. He knew that he had been toeing the mark absolutely.

It developed that Mr. Owens knew it too. Without any preliminaries he said:

"I'm going to put you down in the advertising department. There's a good chance for you there if you're made of the right sort of stuff."

"Thank you, I — I'd rather be in the advertising department than anywhere else."

"Very well," Mr. Owens grunted. "Get busy, then."

Jimmy found that, for the time being at least, he was to assist Mr. Owens' son Bertrand, a young man just out of college and a likeable chap, who delighted quite as much as did Jimmy in smearing himself with printer's ink and in tuning up the machinery.

The Berrington Publishing Company had none of its books manufactured in the building in which its offices were located, but it had a few fonts of type and several small presses there, for the accommodation of rush jobs in the circular field. Jimmy's special charge was somewhat prosaic — the storing of the circulars, neatly tied in packages and recorded, and the delivery of them, when called for by the different departments of the house and by the book dealers of the country. He was living, however, in the atmosphere in which these circulars were made, and he hoped, sooner or later, to assist in the setting of the type and in the actual printing. In fact, once during the first fortnight of his work with the department, when there was a call for many extra sets of proof of a forthcoming announcement, Bertrand turned the hand press over to him and showed him how to take the impressions from the type.

That was a day which Jimmy long remembered.

It was while he was engaged in this fascinating occupation that Fred Garson came in, ostensibly with a memorandum for Bertrand, but really, as Jimmy quite understood, knowing that Fred rarely condescended to deliver house memoranda now that he was in the cashier's department, to get in a word with Jimmy.

"You're a sweet-looking mess," Fred said, keeping his distance as though he expected the smudge on Jimmy's hands and face to jump over on to him if he got close enough. "You've got a blotch in the middle of your forehead as big as your fist and another on your cheek, and look at your hands!"

"Gee! aren't they lovely?" Jimmy fairly oozed satisfaction, "but look at these proofs, all nice and clean. See, first you put the sheet down on the frame like this, then you spread it out smooth and bring down this weight on it. Then you lift it up and take off your proof. Isn't that nice?"

"Maybe. Don't appeal to me. Got a minute?"

"Sure, what you want?"

"You know that night when you was over to the Office Boys' League?"

"Yes."

"You remember how they was talking about organizing strikes?"

"Yes."

"Well, they're doing it. One of the guys got all the boys in his place to go together to the boss and demand more money and they got it."

"They did?"

"Yep, and we had another meeting last night and we all agreed to see what we could do over in our own joints. I'm the organizer for Berrington's and I'm trying to call a meeting of all the boys for this noon down in the stock room. Will you come? Nobody's said he wouldn't, so far."

"I don't mind coming. That doesn't say I'll strike. I'm satisfied now."

"Don't ever be satisfied! If you are you won't get what's comin' to you. Well, that's all and I'll see you, then, this noon at about half past twelve."

"All right; so long."

Bertrand, who was bending over a case of type, had heard the conversation. His eyes twinkled as

he turned to Jimmy. "What's the idea, Jimmy, you boys going to get together and demand your rights?"

Jimmy was embarrassed. "Why, you see, there's a club that . . . Garson belongs to . . . that's trying to look out for the office boys. I guess Fred's hoping we'll have a club like that here, or something. I don't know much about it." He felt the weakness of his reply himself.

"An office boys' club? That's not a bad idea. Why don't you get up one?"

"That's what we're talking about."

"But I mean a club for good times, not one of these serious-minded affairs. Have a baseball team and a football team; I'll coach you if you do. I played baseball on the Columbia College team and I know a little about other games."

"You'd coach us, would you?"

"Yes! Think it over, kid."

Jimmy did think it over, and when he went to the meeting at twelve-thirty it was with a real idea. He didn't get an opportunity to express it for some time. Fred held the floor.

"We ought to have an hour for lunch and quit

at five sharp and we ought to get twelve dollars a week to start and fifteen in three months. Those are the figures laid down by the Office Boys' League," Fred said.

"What's the Office Boys' League that it should be laying down figures for me?" piped up a boy attached to the sales department.

"Will you guys keep still 'til I get through?" Garson glared at the lads sitting on the packing cases around him. "The only way you'll ever get anything in this world is to kick for it. The louder you yell, the more you'll get. I'm out for what's coming to me. Ain't you? Or do you poor fish want to have the boss take his share and part of yours? If you ask for fifteen dollars in three months you'll get fifteen! Now, then, do we go in on this thing with the Office Boys' League, or do we just sit back and say 'please' and 'thank you' and take the leavings?"

Ben Smith replied first. Long familiarity did not make him the least bit afraid of Fred, despite his blustering oratory.

"It's all right," he drawled, "to say we demand fifteen dollars and hours off and all that sort of

thing, but what's going to happen if they don't like our demanding it an' give us the bounce? Is the Office Boys' League going to keep us in spending money 'til we get another job? I'm for demanding, if it's safe, but not otherwise."

"Certainly not!" Fred retorted with emphasis. "The Office Boys' League ain't going to do any such thing. If you lose your job you're not paid till you get another one, that's all. But who's afraid of losing his job in a case like this? It's the starting of a fight for our rights and we'll win in time, if we don't right away. I ain't afraid to go in and face the whole crew of bosses and stand up stiff. I'll do the talking if you guys'll back me up."

"How back you up?" came another inquiry.

"Why, by quitting if you don't get what you ask for."

There was an awkward silence, and it was here that Jimmy sprang his suggestion.

"I don't think much of this strike business," he said. "I think if I was the G. M. I'd fire the whole bunch. We aren't so important they couldn't get along without us, and I say, if anybody thinks he isn't gettin' enough money for the work he's doing

let him go and talk to Mr. Owens about it himself."

"You make me sick," Fred broke in disgustedly. "Don't you know that in order to get anything you've got to stand together? Great Scott! If you only knew what was being done by men combining in the trades you'd see what a chance there was here. I know all about that side of it. I've got particulars."

"I don't care if you have," Jimmy replied. "I'm voting no. I like my job too much."

With the exception of Ben Smith, who was characteristically noncommittal, all the others sided with Jimmy, which gave him confidence to proceed with his plan.

"Now while we aren't going to strike," he said, "I don't see why we shouldn't form a club."

"What for, pink teas?" Fred interrupted.

Jimmy ignored him and went right on. "We could hold meetings and get up a baseball team and go on hikes —" he paused.

The idea was cordially received.

"Now you're talking."

"I'd like to."

"You can count on me."

"And then," Jimmy went on, flattered at the reception accorded his suggestion, "if there was anything we didn't like we could speak to Mr. Owens about it."

"That's the idea."

"Sure," sneered Fred. "Say 'please.'"

"What's the answer? Shall we do it?" Jimmy seemed to have taken over from Fred the running of the meeting.

An affirmative chorus answered his inquiry.

"When'll we start?"

"Right away," several exclaimed.

"All right. Perhaps we could have a meeting some night at my house and fix things up."

"Ought to elect officers," Ben volunteered.

"We could do that then. It's time we were getting back to work now," Jimmy concluded. "We'll start this club business going right away."

They scattered. Fred and Jimmy were left alone.

"Don't see why you had to knock the whole thing in the head," Fred said sourly.

"Oh, come now, forget it! You wouldn't get sore just because I didn't fall in with you."

Fred smiled sheepishly. "No, not exactly sore,

but still I wish you had. You won't ever be able to do anything with this bunch; too much like babies. The Office Boys' League is the crowd! By the way, I had you up for membership last night and you were voted in. Congratulations."

"I — a member of the Office Boys' League? Thanks — thanks a lot." His tone did not convey unalloyed pleasure. He didn't know whether he wanted to be a member of the Office Boys' League or not.

## CHAPTER VII

### “A BOY WITHOUT A COUNTRY”

FRED GARSON might well have been termed “a boy without a country.” Born of Russian parentage he had come to America at the age of five in company with his father, who was fleeing Russia where he had become embroiled in political strife. Shortly after his arrival in America he had died, and Fred had become the charge of Alexeyitch Ognev briefly and popularly known as “Alex.”

Fred grew up in an atmosphere of discontent. His adult associates were men and women railing at the government and at existing social conditions. It was the most natural thing in the world for him, therefore, to think that he was being defrauded of his rights by those in power, some mysterious circle of masters who had control of things and who would keep control until they were ousted by the “common people.” He looked upon himself as one of

an exploited class, whose ability and energy were used for the benefit of others. He failed utterly to see that entire freedom of action was his. He sensed none of the advantages that lay around him, many of which he did not know existed. He felt a certain rebellion at what he thought was the injustice of it all, and he was constantly maintaining, just as were his elders, that sooner or later he would get what was coming to him. He was in fact a replica, in little, of Alex and of half a dozen others—Alex's associates. He was the logical product of his environment.

With all this, there were still in Fred's make-up qualities of undeniable charm. There was a fearlessness about him that sometimes verged on defiance, but unless that characteristic was roused he seemed only like an eager, impetuous lad. He was generous, provided he could be so in his own way; but was obstinate if his desires were curbed. He was generally a good mixer and popular, but in order to be wholly in his element he had to be the leader.

Fred was undeniably interested in Jimmy and Jimmy was interested in Fred. Though Fred professed to scorn Jimmy's opinion, and though he

would, in many instances, have thrown over altogether a boy who differed with him as often as Jimmy did, he did not wish to throw over Jimmy. He was drawn to him, he wanted to lead him his way, and every time that he failed to do so he was provoked at himself for having anything further to do with him, but almost before he realized it he would find himself back on some new tack.

Jimmy, on the other hand, wanted Fred to like him, even though he couldn't approve of all that Fred did and said. He had served to raise a big question in Jimmy's mind: Were Fred's ideas of honor the right ideas? Were his principles those which he would like to make his own? Would his mother be proud of him if he followed Fred's lead?

While he was debating these things he clung tenaciously to his old ideals, resolving not to throw over the old until he was sure of the new.

The severest test of the friendship of the two boys came as a result of their differing attitudes toward their jobs. The first clash was precipitated at the organization meeting of the Berrington Boys' Association — a name previously unanimously

agreed upon — which was held at Jimmy's home a week or two after the stock-room conference.

All the boys of the company came, even three or four who thought themselves above the office-boy classification. It was an informal meeting, run without any attempt at parliamentary procedure.

Jimmy was suggested for president, but he at once declined.

“No, fellows, Fred ought to be president. You see he belongs to a club and knows how to run one. I'd be new at it.”

Fred demurred, but was plainly pleased, and as there was no dissenting voice he was acclaimed the club's head. Jimmy was named vice president, Ben Smith, treasurer, and Frank Lockwood, secretary.

With the list of officers complete Fred began his “inaugural” speech.

“What I want to know is, what's this club going to do? You got to get your back up in this world if you're going to amount to anything, and I say let's be a red hot proposition and make Berrington's a fit place to work in.”

“Nothing doing. This is to be a social club.”

Fred glared at the offending speaker, a little, tow-

headed youngster from the educational department.

"Social," he exclaimed. "Socialist, maybe."

Jimmy saw trouble. "I don't see why it can't be a little bit of both," he volunteered, "a club to have a good time and a club to help us along."

"The two things don't mix. Got to be one or the other," Fred snapped back.

Jimmy flared up. "Let's talk sense! What's the idea of all the time preaching striking and that sort of bunk? It won't get you anywhere. If we had all the office boys in the city it would be different. But for us to get cocky is all foolishness. We'd be out on the street looking for a job before we knew it and they'd have somebody else taking our places and wouldn't miss us in ten minutes."

"Very well!" Fred plainly showed his disgust, "If that's the way you feel about it, why, there's nothing more to say. But the Office Boys' League aren't going at it that way. They're organized, as they ought to be. Already the fellows in one concern have taken the League's advice and put in their demands and got 'em!"

"Yes," Jimmy interrupted, "but what about that other company that bounced the whole crew?"

"Never mind about them. They'll get their jobs back or land better ones and when things are running proper that firm that was so high and mighty'll have such a hard time finding office boys they'll forget what they look like."

"Oh, dry up, you two, will you?" Lockwood put in, "I say we don't want any of this holdup business and striking. Ain't that right, bunch?"

There was a roar of assent.

"See? Now let's get down to something else."

That wasn't the end of it, though it closed the discussion for the evening. A few nights later it was revived when Jimmy went to the bimonthly meeting of the Office Boys' League. It was the first meeting since his election to membership, and while he wasn't at all sure that he wanted to retain his connection with the League he still thought he'd drop in on them for a time until he'd made up his mind.

The business session was given over to fiery talks by the older boys, urging concerted action for higher pay and freely criticizing those who were opposed to presenting their arguments in forceful manner. It became evident that there was a good deal of dis-

satisfaction in the League itself. Boys, blinded by the oratory of the various speakers, had made demands upon their employers and had, almost without exception, been discharged. They had, to be sure, soon found other places, but they had gained nothing by the change and had lost in the pride and pleasure that come from old associations. The meeting adjourned after an attack upon the League's policies made by one of the boys who had suffered by following them and with whose remarks many of those present seemed to agree.

Jimmy made his way across the room to Fred. Fred saw him coming and said to the group around him, ostensibly for Jimmy's edification, "It's just such guys as he that's keeping the movement back — a lot of poor idiots that don't know enough to butter their own bread." As Jimmy came up, he went on: "You make me sore, Quigg. If you weren't such a 'fraid-cat you'd come in on this thing and if you did we could get the whole bunch at Berrington's, and if Berrington's boys went on a strike, a lot of others would follow. But no, you're so almighty afraid you won't get your ten per."

"That's exactly it," Jimmy acknowledged. "I

need that ten. I'm with you fellows in thinking we don't get enough money mostly, but I think the way to get more is to show the people you work for that you earn it and you don't prove that by quitting."

"That's beautiful," one of the boys in the group put in, "but it won't work. Business is business — that's what they all say, and you've got to hit 'em over the head to get your dues."

"Well, you can hit 'em if you want to. I'm going to stick for a while 'til I see if I can't get what I earn. Most likely I'll come round to your side."

"Most likely you won't," muttered a disgruntled individual, "if you've got any sense. I wish I was back where I was before I struck. Nothing to it, I'll say."

"Why don't you strike yourself, you're so stuck on the idea?" Jimmy asked, turning to Fred. "Go and make your own demands to Owens and see what happens."

"And be the goat for the whole bunch? Not much! But don't you worry, if I don't get what's coming to me one way I'll get it another. Make no mistake on that!"

"There's two ways of looking at that getting

what's-coming-to-you-business,"— again the voice of the boy who had struck and lost, "take it from me."

"Humph!" was Fred's only comment.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FRED DISAPPEARS

“JIMMY, old boy, we’ve got a rush on this morning and I’m going to ask you to print that circular on the new novels.” Bertrand looked at Jimmy inquiringly.

“I’d like to! Are you sure I can do it?”

“You bet! Perfectly simple. I’ll show you how. The frames are all ready and about all you’ll have to do after you get one of them on the press is to set the thing going and feed the paper to it. If you can take care of that I can be working on this special business circular they’re in such a hurry about.”

“Lead me to it!”

“Good! I’ll show you how to go about it immediately.”

Bertrand explained the mechanics of the printing press, a small affair run by electricity and used only for odd jobs.

"There, now," he concluded after a few moments, "that's all there is to it. I've got the front page in. When you have printed two thousand of them, stop and take the frame out and put in the frame containing the back page. It's over there in the corner all ready to be slipped into place. You want to be sure and get the right frame. You can tell which it is by looking at your O. K.d proof. There are several frames all the same size down there belonging to other jobs, but if you follow your proof, you'll be all right."

Jimmy nodded, snapped on the power, and went at this altogether fascinating business of converting a sheet of white paper into reading matter. He had nearly finished printing the two thousand sheets on one side when Ben Smith came in. Jimmy pretended not to see him, making the most of this opportunity to impress Ben. Ben watched him for a moment and then made his presence emphatically known.

"Say," he bawled out above the noise of the press, "d'you think I'm going to stand here watching you all day?"

"Oh, you Ben?"

"Yes, me Ben, and don't make out you didn't know I was here. I'd like to know since when I've got to be your messenger boy, anyhow."

"What's the trouble?" Jimmy turned off the power and waited for Ben to explain.

"Helen Platt she gives me this and she says to take it down to you. I don't know why I should, but I did. It's against the rules to send round private notes; don't you know that?"

Jimmy flushed and reached for the envelope in Ben's hands.

"I don't know what it is."

"Naw, of course you don't. Most likely it's company affairs — *nit!* Well, I know you won't read it while I'm here, so I'll beat it. You can bring your answer up to her yourself, unless you can find somebody else to do your bidding," and Ben shambled out.

Jimmy tore open the envelope. Inside was a penciled note.

JIMMY:

Would you like to go with me to-night to Promise Hall? We're having a party and are allowed to bring a friend. I'd be glad if you could go.

HELEN.

There was no obliging messenger in Jimmy's department, inasmuch as he was the messenger himself, so there was nothing for him to do but to reply in person. He gave a rueful look at his ink-smeared hands, but as he felt that he couldn't spare the time to clean up, he went as he was.

Helen was watching for him, though no one would have guessed it. To all appearances the typewriter before which she was sitting had her whole attention.

Jimmy went up to her and leaned over the desk.

"I'm with you," he said; "when do we go?"

"You can come to my house after supper, about eight o'clock. This is where I live," and Helen wrote the address on a slip of paper.

"I'll be there. But what's it all about? What do we do? What's Promise Hall?"

"I'll tell you on our way up. You'll like it. We've had parties before; but I—I never went with any boy."

"Didn't you? Well . . ." embarrassed, "I'll be there," he repeated.

"At eight; don't forget."

Jimmy hurried back to the advertising office and

attacked his printing with renewed zeal, finishing the two thousand sheets just before lunch time.

In the afternoon several things came up to prevent him from starting the printing of the reverse side — he had to get out supplies of circulars, it seemed, for nearly every department in the building; he had to look up old cuts that hadn't been used for years; he had to do innumerable errands in the building — and it was three o'clock before he was able to turn to the press. He took out the frame containing the first page and stood it up against the wall and was just about to get the frame containing the second page when Ben Smith came in again.

"Say, Jimmy, the old man wants to see you right away."

"The old man?"

"Mr. Berrington."

"Mr. Berrington wants to see me?"

"That's what he said. He says 'Go get Jimmy Quigg.' Just like that."

"I don't see what he can want me for."

"Well if I was you I'd go 'n' find out, not stand there thinking about it."

"I've got to wash up. Look at my hands!"



“But what’s it all about? What do we do?”



"If I was you I wouldn't wash up. When he says 'Go get Jimmy Quigg' without any please or nothing and in the voice he said it, washing up isn't of any importance."

Jimmy had not been in Mr. Berrington's office since that first day and it was with a good deal of trepidation that he turned the knob and walked in. Not only was Mr. Berrington there, but Mr. Owens and the cashier.

"Is this the boy?" Mr. Berrington asked Mr. Owens.

"Yes, this is Jimmy Quigg."

Mr. Berrington turned to him. "Have you seen Fred Garson to-day?"

"Fred? Why — no ——"

"You don't seem certain of it."

"I was just trying to think," Jimmy replied; "but I haven't seen him, I'm sure."

"They tell me that you are his special friend," Mr. Berrington observed.

"I like Fred. I don't know as I'm his special friend exactly."

"Do you know what he was planning to do to-day?"

"No, he didn't say anything particular last night."

"Last night?" Mr. Owens interjected. "You saw him last night?"

"Yes, at the Office Boys' League."

"At the what?" Mr. Berrington took up the examination.

"The Office Boys' League. That's a club of office boys that we both belong to."

"What?" again Mr. Owens. "You mean that both you and Fred belong to that bunch that's making all that silly trouble among boys?"

"I don't know as you can say that. They are trying to look out for boys' interests."

"Yes," Mr. Owens said. "I read about them in the newspaper. They're a radical set," he added to Mr. Berrington. "Are you and Fred in favor of strikes and that sort of thing?"

"Fred and I don't exactly agree. He says he is and I — I'm not, but I don't think he means all he says sometimes."

Following a moment's silence, Mr. Berrington spoke:

"The situation is pretty serious, young man, and

it's up to you to tell us all you know. Young Garrison started for the bank early this morning with some bonds and other securities and he hasn't returned. Neither has he reported at the bank. He has disappeared completely and with him something like five thousand dollars."

"But — but I — I can't understand it."

"Simple enough to understand," Mr. Berrington snapped. "Those are the facts. Now, then, do you know of anything that will help us? The poor little fool, to think he could put over anything like that. He'll be in jail in a few hours or a few days and that'll finish him for life."

"Oh, but I don't believe it," Jimmy began in angry protest. "Fred was always talking that — that way." He stopped suddenly, realizing that he had made a damaging admission.

"Talking what way?" Mr. Owens demanded.

"Saying things that he didn't mean," Jimmy explained lamely.

"Yes," Mr. Berrington put in, "like what? Be specific."

"Why — why — I can't."

"Yes, yes, you can, too. It's no laughing matter,

boy. Don't you know that you'll be held as an accomplice in the theft if you withhold any information that would help the law take its course?"

"But I don't know anything! I was just thinking of the way he talked, like — well, he was always saying that he'd get what was coming to him and — and things like that. But that didn't mean anything, really. Believe that," Jimmy pleaded, "please believe that. I'm sorry I said anything."

"That's just about my sizing up of the situation. He'll get what's coming to him. Humph! We'll see that he does!" Mr. Owens spoke with grim emphasis.

"It's a terrible pity," Mr. Berrington said in an aside to Mr. Owens, "that we aren't insured against this sort of thing. If we were, you know, all we'd have to do would be to call in representatives of the insurance company and put it up to them. They'd conduct the investigations and make good the loss.

"I'm surprised," turning to the cashier, "that you trusted so large a sum of money to a boy you don't know anything about."

The cashier hastily interposed: "Garson had been with us a year. He seemed honest, and was a

likable chap. I suppose we have grown careless. We've always used the boy in my department for bank errands, never had any trouble before, and so haven't been on the lookout for such a possibility; besides, it's such a little ways to the bank ——”

Mr. Berrington cut him short. “No use talking about it, now that the deed's done. But guard against a repetition, Owens. Insure the department. In the present unfortunate circumstance we'll have to call in the police. And you, young man”— returning to Jimmy, who had stood during this conversation uncomfortably awaiting the pleasure of his superiors—“would better be prepared to help all you can. In the meantime not a word of this to any one; do you understand? ”

Jimmy nodded.

“That's all; you may go back to your work now.”

“Couldn't all this be a mistake? ” Jimmy asked desperately. “Couldn't he have been robbed or something? ”

“If he was we'll find it out soon enough.”

On his way back to the office, Ben Smith stopped him. “What did they want? ” he whispered.

“Nothing much.”

"No, I shouldn't think so from your looks. You needn't tell if you don't want to."

"Don't ask me," Jimmy gulped, "don't ask me. I—I can't tell," and he made a quick retreat. He was glad no one down in his department knew about the ordeal through which he had just passed; he didn't want to make any explanations.

"I was wondering how soon you'd get back on that printing job," Bertrand remarked as he came in.

"Right away," Jimmy replied, making an effort to appear natural, though there was a queer feeling at the pit of his stomach and his knees shook. He seemed to see everything through a fog and all the while he was saying over to himself: "He didn't do it. He couldn't."

He went to the corner and took up a frame of type and put it on the press, adjusting it as he had been shown. Then he wearily picked up a stack of circulars which had been printed on the one side and proceeded to print them on the other. He did all this mechanically. He saw neither circular nor printing press, but only Fred as he had seen him the night before, a scornful expression on his face, and

he heard him say again: "If I don't get what's coming to me one way I'll get it another. Make no mistake on that."

About half the pile of circulars had been run off when Bertrand stepped over and took one of them up casually. His exclamation brought Jimmy at once to the present.

"Good Lord, boy! Do you know what you're doing? You've got half of the novel circular and half of the circular on farm books. Stop the press! I should suppose common sense would tell you pictures of pigs"—Bertrand pointed disgustedly to the side which Jimmy was printing—"don't go with fiction."

Jimmy looked at the offending sheet of paper stupidly. "I'm—I'm sorry."

"Sorry! I should think you'd better be. All that paper wasted. Throw it away. Get it out of sight! All the time lost, too! I ought to have known better than to have put you at the work. I told you to watch out and get the right frame. You must have grabbed the first one you came to without looking at your proofs. Hereafter I'll do the printing myself."

"Something happened . . . and I got sort of upset."

"Yes, I should think you must have," Bertrand agreed icily. "My fault, though; I ought to have known better."

"Don't say that! I like to do it so much."

"So it seems."

"And I can do it, too, and I will, if you'll let me. I'll stay to-night and print them over. I'll — I'll do anything."

"Not much you'll stay to-night. I'll print these myself. We'll see what we shall see as to whether you get another try at it or not." Bertrand was hardly more than a boy himself and already he was regretting his harshness. He had always liked Jimmy. "It was an absolutely fool stunt, you've got to admit that," he concluded, a bit more softly.

It was only an hour to closing time, but how that hour dragged for Jimmy, partly because he had nothing to do. Bertrand wouldn't trust him around the presses, he wouldn't even allow him to take proofs, and no one came to him for supplies. He just had to sit and think. While his mind dwelt much of the time on his own unfortunate mistake,

Fred occupied a large part of his thoughts. Where was he? What was he doing? Couldn't he do something to help him?

He had entirely forgotten about the party for that evening, but he was reminded of it as he came out of the building on his way home. Helen was standing just outside the door. "Don't forget," she whispered, as he passed by.

"Say," he began, intending to tell her that he couldn't come, "I can't — come." Then he thought better of it. Why shouldn't he go? What was there he could do that night? "I can't come," he repeated, "until about quarter after eight."

"Oh you!" Helen drawled out, "I thought you was going to say you couldn't come, then I'd be mad."

"I'll be there with bells on," Jimmy rejoined gayly and turned away from her and went wearily homeward.

## CHAPTER IX

### PROMISE HALL

A TALL, square building of yellow brick, almost forbidding in its plainness, relieved only by an arched doorway of ample proportions; squalid buildings on either side; a narrow street littered with papers and rubbish — such were Promise Hall and its surroundings.

Within its walls was being tried a novel experiment in citizen making. A benefactor of large vision, and a pocketbook which knew few limitations, was working out, with the coöperation of others, also men and women of ideas, schemes that were dear to him and to them, and which had for their purpose the enrichment of American life. To these commodious rooms they invited the boys and girls of the city without reference to nationality, creed, or color. And the boys and girls of the city came, at first, that was years before, timidly, but soon joyfully. You

could see them at night, before the doors were open, crowding the entrance way, shouting and laughing and clamoring for admittance, though they knew perfectly well that exactly at seven o'clock the building would be opened to them, not one minute before, not one minute later. Occasionally a father or a mother came, their bulky figures looming large in the crowd of youngsters, like giants among pygmies. Perhaps they came out of curiosity to see what it was that so held Tony or Micky or Rosy. If that was their motive they went away satisfied.

When Jimmy and Helen arrived that night at Promise Hall the doors had been open nearly an hour, so that all was quiet outside and Jimmy was quite unprepared for the sight that met his eyes inside.

“Gee!” he exclaimed, “what a mob.”

Helen looked around appraisingly. “Just about the same as usual. It won’t look so many when they sit down. We’re early. You can put your hat in the cloak room over there and wait here for me. I’ll be back in a minute.”

His hat disposed of, Jimmy took his stand near the door. The boys and girls were thoroughly en-

joying themselves. They stood in little groups, laughing and chatting. They ran about bumping good-naturedly into each other. They played a disorganized game of tag in and about the more sedate conversationalists. They hurled greetings the whole length of the hall, thereby adding to the din. The louder the racket the broader their smiles.

Helen returned.

"I thought you said they was very strict here," Jimmy volunteered.

"They are! Just wait until they get started. They always let us act this way until they're ready to begin."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and there goes the whistle now."

With the words there came a shrill blast three times, and its effect was magical. Not that the several hundred boys and girls stopped talking at once or refrained from giving a final friendly grab at a neighbor's tie. Still, as promptly as was in keeping with their dignity, they turned to the far end of the hall where the chairs had been arranged in formal rows and took seats.

A young man stood on a platform facing them, awaiting their attention. In less than five minutes they were all seated and were looking up at him expectantly. He began:

“To-night the various clubs of Promise Hall are, as you know, meeting together, boys and girls. We haven’t had many of these union sociables and we hope that from now on we can have them more frequently. Before we turn to our entertainment, which is to be furnished by one of the girls’ clubs and one of the boys’ clubs, there is something I wish to say to you. That’s the real reason for this get-together.

“How many of you know what a pageant is?”

A dozen hands shot up.

“All right, Morris, you tell us.”

A stocky boy of dark complexion rose to his feet.

“A pageant is like a theater, Mr. Wilbur, only you don’t have talking in it.” He sat down.

“That’s not such a bad definition at that,” Mr. Wilbur began, “You mean, I suppose, that it’s like a play in pantomime. That’s not altogether right. Usually there is no speaking in a pageant, but some

of the time there is. For our present purposes let's say that a pageant is a series of pictures which make clear the progress of events.

"You all know what tableaux are. We have had them many a time. A pageant is made up of moving tableaux." He paused that his words might take effect. He repeated: "A pageant is a series of moving tableaux, depicting the course of events."

In a moment he went on: "Well, we're going to have a pageant, the biggest and most wonderful thing we have ever attempted in Promise Hall and we want all the boys and girls of all the clubs to take part in it. 'America' we're going to call our pageant, and we shall try to show just what America means, just what our country stands for, by a series of moving tableaux, from the time when Columbus first discovered the island of San Salvador to the present day.

"It means lots of work, not only in getting together our costumes and our scenery, for we shall make everything ourselves, but it means the study of history and of geography and of many other things in order that our tableaux may be accurate."

"When's this show coming off, Mr. Wilbur?" one of the boys called out.

"It is to be presented on October 12, Columbus Day. We shall give it here in this room, and all your parents and friends will be invited to come.

"Now, then, down to business. The leader of a club will act as the organizer of that club. I have assigned definite work to each group. Some will prepare the costumes under the direction of the sewing teacher. This will mean, as you can see, looking up pictures of the clothes worn in the different periods of our history. Others have been assigned to the construction section and will build the scenery. They will be directed by our manual training teacher. Others, the older groups, will work out the tableaux and choose the significant incidents to be presented. So on through the list. Each club will have its part, and if we all work together we shall bring about a glorious finale.

"On the slips of paper which are now being distributed to you have been written the names of the clubs, the work to which each has been assigned, the hours of work, and at the bottom of the sheet the

schedule of rehearsals. Keep these for reference.

"I am now glad to turn the meeting over to Bella Ludwig and Peter Mollinetti of the Sunshine and Star Clubs respectively, who will look out for your entertainment. We will close, as always, with the grand march."

There followed a miscellaneous program of music and recitations, winding up with a dramatic skit, all of the numbers being wildly applauded.

"Is this all?" Jimmy whispered to Helen.

"All except the march. We're allowed to stay around and talk now until ten o'clock. Then they'll begin playing the piano and we get in line, boys on one side and girls on the other. We march around for a time and finally parade right up to the cloak rooms and get our things. That's the way we always get out."

"Some scheme, isn't it?"

"Yes. Would you like to go around the building?"

"I certainly would."

"Come along, then." Helen led him first downstairs to the gymnasium, pointing out its many ex-

cellencies. "The girls have it three nights and the boys have it three," she explained.

The first floor was given over entirely to the hall. At the sides and back was a balcony and opening on this many little doors. These aroused Jimmy's curiosity. "What's in there?" he asked.

"Those are rooms where we study."

"Study?"

"Yes. You see, this Promise Hall isn't all having games and parties. If you belong to it, you have to study or work or do something."

"What does your club do?"

"We sew. Our teacher she shows us how to make dresses and mend things. She's got the most wonderful ideas about saving clothes and using them over and over."

"What do the boys' clubs do?"

"Some of them are carpentry clubs and some of them are debating clubs and some study civics and all sorts of things."

"How often do you have to study?"

"One night a week. Why, would you like to belong?"

“ Could I?”

“ Costs nothing to belong. All you have to do is to say you want to.”

“ I’ll think about it. I guess maybe I’d like to, if —”

“ If what?”

“ Oh, nothing.”

For a brief period he had forgotten Fred Garrison. He had been remembering him all too keenly up to the time when he had entered Promise Hall, but he had been so flooded with new interests there that the worry and perplexity had left him temporarily.

“ You needn’t tell me if you don’t want to.”

“ I haven’t got anything to tell. I’d like to join if — if I can find the time.”

“ Oh!” Helen said, but in a tone which did not indicate satisfaction with the explanation.

As they stood looking down from the balcony, Jimmy’s eyes were caught by a motto in bronze letters that had been stenciled on the wall near the ceiling. “ Here shall they all unite to build the republic of man and the kingdom of God,” he read.

Helen's eyes followed his. "That's from a play. Mr. Wilbur told us about it."

Then came the signal from the pianist and down they hurried to take their places in the grand march, side by side with those who had come from the north and the east and the south and the west.

## CHAPTER X

### JIMMY SEEKS HELP

THE next morning Fred's disappearance was the chief topic of conversation in the Berrington offices. The news of it had gotten around in some way, as such news always does.

Fred had now been away an entire day, his absence had been noticed by some of the boys, and questions had been asked. A careless word or two, dropped by the cashier in the presence of his stenographer, had served to supply one link. Another was furnished by a boy who had heard Fred say that he was going to the bank "with a lot of dough." Ben Smith had added his little testimony about Jimmy's session in the president's office. Soon the chain of circumstantial evidence was complete.

"Humph! You don't need to tell us nothing about it now," was Ben's greeting to Jimmy. "Garrison's lit out and taken some of the company's coin with him — fifty thousand, I hear it was."

"It isn't so," Jimmy hotly retorted. "Where did you get that idea?"

"Well, if it wasn't fifty thousand, it was a lot!"

"That shows how much you know about it," Jimmy flung back and went on to his office, wondering, however, just what Ben did know. Well, he thought, they couldn't blame him for having disclosed anything. He hadn't opened his mouth on the subject! He was glad it was out, however; it would have been difficult keeping silent and pursuing his ordinary course with events such as these stirring in the air.

About noon Mr. Berrington sent for him. "He's got a detective in there with him," Ben Smith volunteered. "The cashier and Mr. Owens have just been in."

"Well, young man," Mr. Berrington began, when he had explained to the grim individual sitting beside him that this was Jimmy Quigg, Garson's friend, "have you seen anything of Garson, or heard anything of him?"

"No, sir."

"What did you do last evening? Go to that Office Boys' League?"

"No, sir, I went to Promise Hall."

"You are a young man of varied interests! Promise Hall one night, Office Boys' League the next," somewhat sarcastically.

Jimmy flushed. "I went to Promise Hall last night for the first time. One of the girls here asked me to go."

"Oh, I see," a little more kindly.

"Everybody knows about Fred's being away, but I didn't tell," Jimmy was made bold to volunteer.

"I expected it would get out. It doesn't make any special difference as I see." Mr. Berrington turned to the detective, "Anything you want to ask him?"

The man shook his head. "No, I guess you've given me all the facts I need for the present," he said.

Mr. Berrington thought for a moment and then nodded to Jimmy. "That's all for now."

For Jimmy the day passed in routine jobs. Bertrand was glum, barely acknowledging his existence and giving him nothing to do but the simplest tasks. Five o'clock brought with it a welcome escape.

At home he told his mother of Fred's trouble.

"Isn't that the boy that you said you didn't know whether you liked or not?" Mrs. Quigg asked.

At once Jimmy was on the defensive in Fred's behalf. "I don't remember as I ever said I didn't like him. He's sort of peculiar in some ways. You remember him, don't you, from the night of the meeting here? He was the tall boy, nice looking, and he made a speech about standing up for our rights."

"Yes, I remember him," Mrs. Quigg answered. "I wasn't 'specially struck with him."

"But, mother, he's all right. He's just different, but he wouldn't do a thing like this, I know he wouldn't."

"Time will tell."

"Yes, but I can't wait. They're mixing me up in it, too."

"Mixing you up? What do you mean, son?" Mrs. Quigg had lost her casual interest.

"Oh, they keep asking me if I've seen him and if I know where he is."

"They do!" in frightened exclamation. "Why should they do that?"

"Well, you see, I've probably had more to do with him than most of the others."

"But you haven't run away. I don't like their questioning you."

Then Jimmy reassured her, though it must be admitted he had suffered some qualms of uneasiness on that score himself. "It isn't that they're suspicious of me; it's just that they're trying to get all the dope they can that'll lead to locating him."

This explanation served to chase the mother's worry away and the subject was soon dropped.

After supper Jimmy announced that he was going to take a run over to the Office Boys' League.

"I can talk about Fred's being away now, and I want to see if any of the boys over there know anything about it. Might get some ideas."

Mrs. Quigg was about to object to his going, but bit back the words and said nothing. "Don't be too late, son; I'll be sitting up."

Jimmy had thought the Office Boys' League a rather unprepossessing organization on his introduction to it, and his first feeling of revolt came back again this night, but intensified tenfold. A more disgruntled and unhappy lot of lads he had

never seen. Things were not going their way. The strikes which the League had fostered were failures, and there was little in common to hold the members together. Bitterness and disgust with the organization were about the only qualities they shared with one another.

Jimmy spied the president and made for him.

"Say, Dykes," he began, "Fred Garson's disappeared; went to the bank with some money and didn't come back. Most likely been robbed. Don't you think the League ought to do something?" He then outlined the circumstances somewhat more fully.

Dykes deliberated. "Don't see what we can do. Suppose I get the fellows here together and you tell 'em about it."

He suited word to action and soon had a semblance of attention. After briefly commenting on the case, he called on Jimmy.

Jimmy rose, somewhat embarrassed, as he was not used to making speeches.

"I haven't any plan," he began, "only I thought as long as this club is supposed to help fellows, it'd want to do something for Garson. He's one of

your best members and he's in trouble. Up at the company, they seem to think he's a thief. If we just told Mr. Berrington we didn't think so and that we believed he'd been robbed or that something had happened to him, it might help some. Sort of indorse him, you know."

A boy was instantly on his feet.

"How do you get that way!" he sneered. "We've each got our own troubles. Don't let's be mixing up in anybody else's, I say. Maybe he did get away with the coin. I don't like this here taking responsibility for him. Nothing doing, nothing doing!"

There were calls of "You bet," "that's the stuff," "take it away," "what do you think we are?" from various parts of the room. When the hubbub had subsided, Jimmy spoke, this time in a flare of anger:

"Is that the kind of quitters you are? That's about what I thought. You talk a lot about acting together and this is the way you do it."

Another boy sprang up and made for Jimmy threateningly.

"Who are you?" he demanded, "that you

should come here and tell us what to do? I'd like to throw you out," and his hands clenched.

Jimmy stood rigidly regarding him.

"Sic him!" some one yelled, and that broke the tension. The would-be assaulter stepped backward a bit.

"If anybody wants to find out who I am or what I am, I'm ready to tell him," Jimmy said.

"Hear, hear! Let's make a ring, and give me a front seat," came a shrill voice.

"Go to it, Digs, don't let him bluff you like that," another sang out.

Jimmy squared his shoulders and prepared for the attack which he thought must inevitably follow. His nerves tingled for the fray. But before the other was ready for the battle — he seemed not so eager for it, now that it was pressing upon him — the president interfered.

"Come on, boys, cut the rough stuff!" he commanded curtly.

Jimmy's would-be assailant very willingly obeyed, but Jimmy's muscles quivered for one good tussle.

"If you've got anything further to say, say it

and be done." Dykes spoke gruffly. His sympathy, too, was apparently not with Jimmy.

"Isn't there anybody here," Jimmy asked, and his voice sounded high and strained, not at all like his own, "who's with me? Isn't there anybody who'd like to do a little scouting around? Even if you don't believe in putting an O. K. on Garson, don't you believe in looking about to see what you can see? Why, there's no telling what we could find out if we'd all turn to. You know Garson's friends; some of you know where he lived, what he used to do! A little detective work, twenty or thirty of us strong, would be sure to show up something! I believe it would square Garson. What do you say?"

There was silence, and then somebody drawled: "Aw, leave dat to de cops."

"Then I'm through with you," Jimmy flung out in a final burst of passion, "you're a bunch of fakers and I'll tell the world so!—" and jamming his hat on to his head he stamped across the room and out of the door, slamming it behind him.

## CHAPTER XI

### A CLUE

**T**HREE was Irish blood in Jimmy Quigg and he reacted very quickly to circumstances. He would have moments of dark despair when he felt that he was shirking his duty in not giving all his time to searching for Fred. He was sure that Fred was innocent, and he felt that all the others were against him or at best were unsympathetic toward him. At these times he criticized himself severely for falling short of an obligation.

But again he would be carried far away from serious things by his keen relish of a good time. This ability to rebound was not all due to the fact that his forbears had lived on the Emerald Isle. It was, in part, youth!

Periods of hot passion, such as his fierce denunciation of the Office Boys' League, would alternate with periods of light-heartedness. So it came about that one night, not far removed from his visit to

the O. B. L. quarters, found him in Promise Hall, a recognized member of one of the boys' clubs and busily engaged in learning all that he could about Columbus, with particular reference to Columbus' ship, the *Santa Maria*, a replica of which the boys were to furnish for the opening tableau of "America."

The leader of the club had been reading from a history all about Columbus' sailing and the size and equipment of the boats. This formality over, the boys were now discussing the way in which they should go about making the miniature vessel from the materials at their disposal.

"Great Cæsar! I don't wonder they have a holiday for Columbus," Jimmy volunteered. "Any guy that would set out on the ocean in a boat like his was ought to have a week of holidays; it was so little, and such a funny shape. I'd hate to have to sail around a bathtub in it."

"It was a pretty good craft for those days," observed Mr. Magrue, the manual training teacher, who was directing the group.

"I'm glad I didn't live in those days, and if I had I'd stayed on land," Jimmy confessed.

"What's the idea, you a 'fraid-cat?'" one of the boys asked. "Don't you ever go out in rowboats or launches? Gee, I'll bet they couldn't get you into an airplane."

Jimmy scoffed, "That's different! You just bet I'd get into an airplane if I had the chance, but—that's modern."

"Probably that's what they said," Mr. Magrue suggested, "in Columbus' day. 'Modern' is only a relative term. But while this discussion is very interesting it isn't getting us anywhere, and we have only a few weeks to whip this whole thing into shape. There is a lot to do besides building a ship, so let's get busy. We're going to make our model just one-sixth the size of the original. Here are our plans to work on, and our wood and cloth and card-board are stacked at the other end of this room. We must be careful not to waste materials. A good workman is never wasteful."

Various boys were assigned to marking off the lumber, others took hammer and saw, and the place soon sounded like a carpentry shop on a rush job.

Jimmy, almost lost in a pair of borrowed overalls far too big for him, was sawing a long, rough beam

into even lengths and singing an improvised song as he worked:

“If the Office Boys’ League could see me now,  
If the Office Boys’ League could see me now —”

He repeated the lines several times and seemed to get huge satisfaction from it.

“If the Office Boys’ League could see me now,  
If the Office Boys’ League could see me now,  
There’d be a riot sure, I vow.”

He stopped and laughed.

“You got ‘em again?” his neighbor inquired.

“Yes, I was just thinking that we aren’t union men. No good carpenter works at night, it’s agin’ the rules. If you don’t believe it ask the O. B. L.”

His companion jeered. “Look at the way you sawed the last piece of wood. You don’t think you’re a *good* carpenter, do you? Don’t see how you could do it so crooked without trying. You’ve slanted down about two inches.”

Jimmy eyed his handiwork carefully. “It isn’t straight, is it? Well, that’s the way they used to saw ‘em when they built Columbus’ boat.”

"You let Magrue see it and he'll tell you it isn't the way they saw 'em now."

"Oh, I wish they'd given me something else to do, I —— Hello! what're the girls coming in here for?" This, as six or eight girls, marshalled by their teacher, hesitated at the doorway. Jimmy, catching sight of Helen among the others, importantly returned to his work. He knew she was watching him and he wanted her to see him in the full exercise of this manly art.

"They're going to work on the cloth for the sails, I'll bet. See! What did I tell you? Mr. Magrue is getting it out and motioning to them to come up his way."

Helen had paused near Jimmy, but Jimmy never raised his eyes.

"Hello, Jimmy!" He looked up, apparently startled.

"Why, hello, Helen," as if in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"Sewing. How do you like your job?"

"Fine; I'm chief carpenter. What have you been working on?"

"Oh, we've been working on the costumes. You

ought to see the clothes Columbus is going to wear. You can't see 'em yet, you wouldn't understand 'em, 'cause they're not put together, but of course we girls can see what they're going to look like from the pieces and they're simply grand."

"You ought to see the boat," Jimmy rallied, "but of course you wouldn't understand about that from the plans and lumber. It's going to be some boat — only I wouldn't want to sail in it. What part you going to have in the pageant?"

"I think I'm going to be an Indian in the first part, but I've got to go now; they're all up there but me!"

"Oh, you Indian," Jimmy called after her. "You Poca — Poca — hontas."

"Who's the girl?" Jimmy's talkative side partner asked.

"She works down where I do; her name's Helen Platt."

"Where do you work?"

"Berrington Publishing Company."

"What doing, office boy?"

"Yep, and other things."

"Do you belong to the Office Boys' League?"

“Not any more.”

“You did belong?”

“Yes.” Jimmy sawed vigorously.

“What’s the matter — don’t you like ‘em?”

“Say, what’s the idea of all this cross-examination business? I did belong to the Office Boys’ League and I don’t belong and that’s all there is to it.

“Me father and mother were Irish,  
Me father and mother were Irish,  
Me father and mother were Irish,  
And I am Irish too,”

he sang.

“You’re a funny guy,” the boy commented.

“Funny by name and funny by nature,” Jimmy retorted.

Thus they passed the evening, working a little, joshing a little, learning a little.

Ten o’clock came surprisingly soon, bringing with it the grand march and exit. Jimmy singled out Helen from the crowd on the steps outside and hurried to her.

“I’m walking down your way,” he said.

“All right,” she agreed, and they started off together.

Halfway down the block a boy touched Jimmy on the arm.

"Say you, Quigg, can I speak to you a minute?"

"You bet; what is it?"

"I belong to the Office Boys' League," he said, pulling Jimmy a step or two away from Helen and speaking in whispers. "I was over there the other night when you gave 'em the deuce. I didn't say anything, but I agreed with you."

"Is that all you've got to tell me? If so, I don't see why you're coming out with it here. Seems to me you might have had a little spirit down at the Office Boys' League. It's too late, now."

"I know it, but I was afraid to say anything then."

"All right, enough said."

"But that isn't all," the boy interjected hastily. "I live in the same street where Garson used to and know something that will help find Fred, I think."

"You do!" Jimmy seized him by the arm. "What is it? Why didn't you say so before?"

"We couldn't do anything about it to-night. You come to my house to-morrow night and I'll tell you."

“Where do you live and what’s your name?”

“Pete Jacobs, and I live on Fender Street right near Second Avenue, number 420, top floor back. Garson lived across the street, number 411. What time will you be down?”

“Seven o’clock.”

“All right, 420 Fender.”

Jimmy hurried on to Helen who was waiting a few yards away.

“What’d he want?” she asked. “Something about Fred?”

“Yes, that boy thinks he’s got a clue.”

“I don’t see why you bother so much on Fred’s account; it probably won’t amount to anything.”

“No, I don’t suppose it will, but it might and anyway it’s kind of exciting,” Jimmy confessed naïvely.

## CHAPTER XII

### JIMMY DECIDES

JIMMY was right on time for his appointment the next evening. Climbing to the top floor of the tenement house at the address Pete had given, he knocked on the door at the head of the stairs. Pete himself opened it and led him into the sitting room, a crowded, littered, ill-smelling place which looked out upon a court and a maze of wash lines still hung with the week's wash. There was no one else in the room.

"Ma's gone out to fetch some wash home," Pete explained.

"Well, what do you know?" Jimmy asked eagerly. "You've had me guessing on this proposition all day."

"I don't know anything; I've seen somebody."

"Not Fred!"

"Nope, I've seen Alex."

“Alex?”

“Fred’s old man, leastwise the man he lived with.”

“Yes, yes,” Jimmy interrupted impatiently, “but I thought he was missing, too; that’s what they said, that since Fred had gone they hadn’t been able to get hold of Alex, either.”

“Sure,” Pete put in, in a superior way, “that’s just the point; Alex has disappeared, but I seen him!”

“Where? How? Tell me!”

“Just seen him coming out of his house.” Pete was apparently trying to be tantalizing by holding back his information as long as he could.

“But I thought they were watching his house,” Jimmy said.

“Well, they do watch it most of the time, but they wasn’t watching it this time. It was too early for them.”

“Will you tell me the whole thing? What’s the idea, anyhow, in being so slow about it? You make me sick.”

“I pretty near told you it all now. Three days ago as I was going to work—I help on a milk

wagon and have to get out and get started at two o'clock in the morning — well, as I was going to work, I saw Alex. That's all there is to it, or most all."

"Did he see you?"

"Don't think so. I had just come down to our first floor and was standing in the entry when I saw this man come out from the house across the street. He'd got a little brown bag in one hand and a package in the other. He looked around sort of carefully and then he came down the steps and started up the street, but I'd got a good look at him and Alex is a man you don't forget once you seen him. Even though he does cut his hair short and shave off his whiskers and put on colored glasses, he can't help showing that he's a tall, skinny guy. Besides he holds his head on one side like this," and Pete illustrated. "He always holds it that way as though he'd got a stiff neck. Something the matter with his spinal colyum, I guess."

"Well, is that all?" Jimmy said in evident disappointment. "You saw him and he got away and that's the whole story?"

"I know where he went."

"You do?" in exasperation. "Well, why in thunder didn't you say so?"

"Was going to only you didn't give me time. Almost lost my job by following him, but I did just the same. He didn't see me, anyhow not until he'd got down to the ferryhouse and had bought his ticket. By that time I'd heard him say the place he was headed for and that's all I wanted. I beat it then. Only kept the boss waiting a quarter of an hour, but the things he said to me almost curdled the milk in the bottles."

"I don't care a continental what your old milk boss said to you. Where did Alex go?"

"Westvale."

"Westvale?"

"Yes; that's a town out in Jersey about ten miles. I went there once to see a guy that was my side partner when I had an office job."

"Westvale," Jimmy mused, "so that's where they are." He was silent for a moment. Then: "Do you know, Pete, this thing makes me sure that Fred's all right, that it's Alex and his gang that are making the real trouble and that have got the dough."

"Maybe; don't know about that."

"I think," Jimmy said, "that you ought to have told the police."

"What's the use in tellin' them? I thought you wanted some sport, I thought you wanted — according to your high-sounding talk down at the Office Boys' League — to have a hand in clearing this up yourself. What are you telling the police for, then, if that's the case?"

"It would be sort of fun doing it — but I don't know — "

"Tell you what, if you're good for it I'll get time off and we'll go out to Westvale together. Unless I miss my bet Alex will be back to-night. He's been coming regular and always toting off a satchel full of something and a package. We could take that first train to Westvale, it leaves at half past three, and it's a cinch he'd be on the train. Now that I know where he goes and how he goes, we wouldn't have to arouse any suspicions by sneaking around after him, anyway not till we reached Westvale. Then we'd have to look out and not lose him."

"Isn't there more than one train to Westvale?"

"No, not at that time or hour. This one is run to take the mail out to the suburbs all along the line."

"You mean," Jimmy hesitated, "that we should go to-morrow morning? Why, that's only about seven or eight hours off."

"You was looking for adventure and are great for running down criminals and all that sort of business; well here you are."

"I've a good notion to do it. It would be fun to find out where they are, and then, when we found out, we could tip off the police and that would be all there'd be to it. I — I'll do it."

"Fine business. We'll have a little sport out of this yet."

"I'll have to go home and tell my mother. She'll be scared silly. She's awful nervous now about this thing, can't see why I don't let it alone, is afraid I'll get mixed up in it."

"I supposed you'd have to go home. You could go now and get a few hours' sleep and meet me on the train."

And thus it was left. Jimmy, after a few words of direction from Pete, hurried to the none-too-

pleasant task of getting his mother's permission.

This permission he was unable to secure. Mrs. Quigg dismissed the suggestion as altogether impossible.

"Indeed you're not going out at that hour to get Fred Garson or anybody else out of trouble; I don't like the look of it, they wouldn't like it at the office, either. No siree! You're going to bed!"

"Oh, mother, it's so exciting."

"Yes, I should think it was. It'd be exciting for me sitting here at home, too, and you out running a chance of being kidnapped by a gang of Russians. No, that's all there is to it. It's settled. You aren't going."

"But I've made all the arrangements."

"You can unmake them then. You shouldn't make such arrangements without consulting me."

"Supposing it was me, mother, in Fred's place, wouldn't you be glad to have somebody who knew what I know try to help me out? Besides, just think, it'll be daylight an hour or two after we are in Westvale. People'll be up and around pretty near as soon as we get there. Nothing could happen to us."

“It makes no difference, Jimmy Quigg, *you're not going!*”

Jimmy knew from the way his mother spoke that it was useless to argue.

He said nothing more for some minutes, but he did a lot of thinking. His mother mistook his silence for sulkiness. She had no doubt of his keen disappointment — his crestfallen expression bore testimony to that.

“Be sensible, Jimmy boy,” she said. “It's only for you I'm thinking.”

“All right,” he answered with an attempt at a smile. He rose and kissed her. “I'm going to bed.”

In the darkness of his room he fought a bitter fight. It was hard for him to deceive her, and yet he saw no other way. She had said she refused permission for his own good. Well, if it was only his own good that was involved it might not be so wrong for him to go against her wishes. The matter at stake was greater than any little personal discomfort.

She didn't understand; that was all there was to it. If she knew the circumstances as he did, she'd

insist on his going, not hold him back. He had failed to make the case clear. She was always ready to sacrifice herself for others; she mustn't expect him to do differently when the emergency arose among his friends.

With such reflections as these he tried to stifle his conscience and to persuade himself that he was justified in the course he had decided to follow.

The night was long. It seemed to him the hours would never pass. He couldn't go to sleep; he would have been afraid to if he could, for he might not wake in time! At last he heard the clock strike two and then the half hour. He slid out of bed, walked cautiously to the door, and listened. His mother was asleep, he knew, by the sound of her breathing. He got into his clothes and with his shoes in his hand crept toward the door, opened it noiselessly, and tiptoed down the stairs.

Jimmy Quigg had decided to go in search of his friend. Though he suffered many pangs of conscience at having to disobey his mother, he comforted himself by saying, "She'll be glad and proud when she sees how it all turns out."

## CHAPTER XIII

WESTVALE AT 3 A.M.

ALTHOUGH Jimmy tried to act as though he were quite accustomed to starting out from home at three o'clock in the morning he was far from feeling that he was doing the usual thing. Yet he was pleasantly thrilled at the adventure that lay before him and eager to arrive at the scene of it.

He met Pete in the ferryhouse.

"Your mother let you come, did she?" was Pete's greeting.

"She didn't want me to," Jimmy answered evasively.

They made the trip across the river and got on the train without incident. There were few passengers aboard, most of them, as Pete explained, workers in a factory halfway up the line that put on a new shift at four o'clock. Alex was not on hand. Jimmy's heart sank as the time for departure drew near and he did not appear.

"What'll we do if he don't come?" Jimmy asked.

"Oh, he'll come all right, all right," Pete replied. "I seen him to night. He was back to the house. He ain't going to spend the day there."

He had hardly finished speaking when they heard some one coming up the aisle of the car. Nearer and nearer sounded the steps, and in a minute a tall man passed the boys and sat down several seats ahead of them and on the opposite side.

Pete nudged Jimmy. "It's him," he said in a whisper, but Jimmy had already recognized him from Pete's description of the way in which he carried his head.

"Has he ever seen you?" Jimmy asked.

"He may have, though I don't think he'd recognize me." As he spoke Pete opened up a newspaper and held it in front of him as though reading. "He can't see through that, anyhow," he said. "Now, then," he continued, "when we get to Westvale we got to be careful. Probably not many people'll be getting off there at this time of night. We don't want to arouse any suspicions. Let him go first, and if he seems to be watching us we must

hurry off in the opposite direction as though we was going to a fire. See?"

"I get you."

But these precautions were seemingly unnecessary, for when, a little more than a quarter of an hour later, the train drew in to Westvale, Alex rose, as unconcerned about anybody else as could be, descended to the platform, and stepped briskly up the street.

The boys followed him at a distance of about one hundred yards, keeping in the shadows and walking softly. Alex did not once look back.

A half hour's walk brought them to the outskirts of the little town, and they were no longer favored with street lights and pavements. It was only with difficulty that they could keep their man in sight and still remain at a safe distance. The road which they were following was through forsaken country, great bare patches of land giving place now and then to wooded spaces, thick with undergrowth. There was hardly a house to be seen. The boys did not exchange a word, for it was deathly quiet and they were afraid that even the faintest whisper might be carried on the still night air to the one ahead. They

marveled that he did not hear their footsteps occasionally when some unevenness in the road made them tread heavier than usual or when a twig snapped under their feet.

Jimmy could at last stand it no longer.

"Gee! Where do you suppose he's taking us?" he whispered. "Looks to me like the jumping-off place."

The only satisfaction he got was a violent shake of the head and an emphatic signal to keep quiet.

The country grew wilder. The road dipped down into a ravine and ran along at the bottom through a level stretch. The bushes were a bit thicker here, the weeds a little taller. Even the trees, and they were many, had woven a close network of foliage and seemed to have a part in this debauch of nature.

Into this black space Alex disappeared. At first the boys thought that when they had gone a little farther they would see him ahead, emerging as from the shadow, but when they, too, came into the blackness, they found that the road ended there. They stood quiet for a moment in perplexity, per-

haps a little frightened. Then Pete grabbed Jimmy's arm and pointed over to their right.

An irregular shape loomed in the distance. At first Jimmy could not make out what it was, but after a moment the outlines took the form of a house. Advancing a few feet they were able to distinguish it more clearly. Crumbling bricks, a roof that had given way entirely on one side and was sagging on the other, broken windows — there was nothing about the place to indicate that it had seen human habitation for years. They crept closer, expecting at any moment to be discovered, not knowing where he whom they were following had gone.

Suddenly coming around the corner of the ruin, a single beam of light pierced the pitch blackness of their surroundings. It came from a window six or seven feet above the ground. A tattered shade had been drawn across it and had succeeded in excluding most of the light, but this one ray was escaping through a hole which had been overlooked.

"There he is, and probably Garson too," Pete whispered.

Jimmy was breathing quickly.

"What can we do?" he panted.

"Think we'd better go back home and to-morrow come out with your Berrington crowd," Pete advised. "We've got them located now."

"Um—I suppose so," Jimmy agreed doubtfully. "Wish I could see in there just once and then I'd be sure, especially if I could see Fred."

"Better leave them alone, and come on, I say. If we get back to the depot we can most likely get an early train to the city. We've found them; what more do you want?"

Jimmy had been listening only half-heartedly, his eyes vainly searching the darkness. At last he spied what he wanted, an old barrel, in a corner up next to the house. He went over to it and tested it. It seemed strong. He lifted it and placed it carefully underneath the window from which the light came.

Pete protested. "Don't be a fool," he said under his breath.

But Jimmy had resolved. He mounted the barrel, which shook uncertainly as it settled itself solidly into position.

Then Jimmy glued his eye to the opening in the shade.

For a full minute he stood there, while down below him Pete protested and urged haste. Then the crash came! The barrel, resenting this interference with its natural disintegration, gave way without warning. Jimmy, endeavoring to save himself, made a grab for the windowsill. Missing it, his hands struck the window frame a resounding blow, and one of the panes of glass fell clatteringly to the floor within, while Jimmy, losing his hold altogether, crashed down into the barrel wreckage.

Pete, now thoroughly frightened, came to Jimmy's assistance. "Hurry up, we must beat it!" he cried.

There were sounds within the room. The curtain was thrust aside and Alex's face peered out. Jimmy made a valiant effort to free himself from hoops and staves. At last he got to his feet, but he sank down again at once. Sharp pains told him that he had wrenched his ankle.

"I can't make it," he groaned, "I've hurt my foot."

Pete assisted him to a standing position.

"You've got to make it. Lean on me," and half carrying him he started laboriously away from the house. If they could only get off a little distance they would soon be lost in the darkness.

But this was not to be. Before they had gone many feet a hand grabbed Pete roughly by the collar and a voice demanded: "What are you doing here?"

Without waiting for a reply, the captor dragged the boys roughly around to the back of the house, up some steps, and into a room lighted with a candle and containing a rough table, a chair or two, and a dilapidated couch from which sawdust was oozing on to the floor.

Here Alex again demanded: "What do you want here?" He turned them around so that the light fell squarely on their faces. As he did so a cry came from another part of the room.

"Jimmy!" It seemed an involuntary sort of cry, suddenly cut off.

"Oho!" Alex darted to the corner from which the voice had come. "So you know one of them, do you, my fine lad! That's very interesting."

Fred got up from the box on which he had been

sitting and walked across the room in the direction of the boys, peering at them intently in the candle's flickering glow. Then he shook his head. "No," he announced, "first I thought one of them was Jimmy Quigg, looks kind of like him, but it isn't. Never saw either of them before."

"Don't think you can put anything like that over on me," Alex roared. "There is something doing here and I'll find out what it is if I have to knock all your heads together. I've been suspicious of you, you little rat," shaking his fist at Fred.

"I haven't done anything, honest!" There was a note of terror in Fred's voice. "How could I do anything, shut up here all the time and somebody watching over me every second?"

"That'll do, that'll do. We'll find out what you did. But first of all we'll begin with this young gentleman here." He turned to Jimmy. "What's your idea, prowling around people's houses at this time of night? Tell me now, quick, before I take you down to the police."

"I — was only passing by and wondered what was doing in this old house. I didn't know anybody lived here."

"Passing by! Don't you know the road ends here? Bah! Passing by at three o'clock in the morning." He turned to Pete. "Have you got anything better than that to tell?"

Pete refused to talk.

"Very well, I'll give you a little time to get up a real story." Alex laughed unpleasantly. "I'm busy now and can't be bothered with you, but I'll put you where you can think it all out nice and pleasant, so that when you get to court you won't be embarrassed by what the judge asks you. He wouldn't accept any such fairy stories as you are handing out now. I've got a nice quiet room especially suitable for such as you and, when I can, I'll let you out."

Alex rose and, ignoring Jimmy's painful limp, shoved the boys ahead of him up a rusty corridor. He opened a door at the end of it and thrust them into a boxlike compartment, shut the door upon them, and locked it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SUSPICIONS

IT was nearly ten o'clock the next morning when Bertrand reported Jimmy's absence from the office to the manager.

"Say, dad, heard anything from Quigg to-day? He hasn't shown up. Queer! Most office boys come in on Saturdays, anyhow, so as to get their pay!"

The elder Owens frowned. "He hasn't been in at all?"

"No."

"I don't like the look of it. Do you know where Quigg lives?"

"No," Bertrand answered. "But Helen Platt does."

"Go get her," Mr. Owens commanded curtly.

Bertrand hurried away, returning a moment later with Helen.

"Do you know where Jimmy Quigg's home is?"

“Yes, sir.”

“I want you to go and see if Jimmy is there. Find out why he hasn’t reported for work if he is. If he isn’t home, have his mother come up here right away. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

After Helen had left, Bertrand turned to his father. “Surely, dad, you don’t think Jimmy is mixed up in this robbery?”

“Don’t want to discuss it now. Go back to your work.”

About an hour later Bertrand was summoned to Mr. Berrington’s office, where he found his father, Mr. Berrington, and a pale, agitated little woman whom he knew at once to be Mrs. Quigg.

“Have you noted anything peculiar about Jimmy Quigg lately; that is, the last day or so?” Mr. Berrington asked him abruptly.

“No, sir, except that I don’t think he’s been quite as attentive to his work as he was at first.”

“Just what do you mean by ‘attentive’? Did he go away from the office for long periods?”

“No, not that.” Bertrand hesitated. “Why, he made mistakes; his mind seemed to be on some-

thing else. When I found out about his friend's being in trouble I thought I understood. The truth is I was a little bit hard on the youngster for a botch he made of a job I'd given him to do. Then I learned that he'd tackled it just after he'd had a conference with you and was all upset. He never said a word to me and, of course, I didn't know about it until later."

"Yes, yes, yes," Mr. Berrington said impatiently, "but you have nothing specific in mind that would indicate that he was planning —"

"Don't you say that!" Mrs. Quigg rose and took a step or two toward the president. She spoke in low tones of repressed passion. "Don't you say that," she repeated. "Don't you even think it! My boy is honest. He'll be back here and prove it himself if you'll only give him time, unless"—there was a catch in her voice—"unless he's got into trouble. He's not a thief." There was defiance and conviction in her utterance.

"I hope not," Mr. Berrington said in a manner plainly intended to be soothing, "but you must admit that your story is a bit unusual."

"I don't know what her story is," Bertrand inter-

rupted, "but I don't believe myself that Jimmy's a thief. He's been working with me for a good many weeks, and while he tried my patience and all that, he was always on the level!"

"What would you say, young man, if I should tell you that he had disappeared?"

"I'd like to know more of the facts before venturing an opinion," Bertrand replied.

"This good woman," Mr. Berrington explained, "says that last night her son told her he had discovered where Fred Garson was and asked permission to go on some wild escapade at three o'clock in the morning for the purpose of clearing up that mystery. When permission was denied he sneaked away, while his mother slept — or so she believes."

"That would be like Jimmy; not the sneaking-away part, but his desire to help his friend at any cost," Bertrand said. "Impulsive, generous, foolhardy."

Mr. Berrington smiled. "You are consistent, anyway. Of course, I have no desire to be unjust to the boy. I know nothing about him, except that he is said to be Garson's best friend here. Garson

has disappeared with a lot of money, now Quigg disappears. What am I to think?"

"Is that all that you know about it?" Bertrand asked. "Just that he wished to follow up some evidence he had unearthed that he thought would clear Fred?"

"Mrs. Quigg says," his father replied, "that they wanted to go to Westvale on the three-thirty A.M. train."

"They! Who besides Jimmy?"

"Some other boy whose name Mrs. Quigg doesn't know. It was he who had the facts. Of course she isn't certain that that's where Jimmy went, but indications point that way."

"Have you communicated with anybody in Westvale?"

Mr. Owens shook his head negatively. "Not yet. This information will be given to the police in good time."

"I am almost as sure as Mrs. Quigg that Jimmy's all right," Bertrand said. "I wish, sir," turning to Mr. Berrington, "that you'd let me go out to Westvale. I might learn something. I have been

so sort of rough with the kid since he flunked so miserably on his job, that I'd like to do something to clear myself with him. It would make me feel a bit more decent."

"No objection, as I know of, to your going, but I don't see what particular good can come of it."

"Thank you. It would do me good, anyway. And I'm going right now."

As he passed Mrs. Quigg he touched her arm gently. "It'll come out all right," he whispered, "and a few years from now you'll look back at this thing and laugh and think it was the funniest joke ever. You just see."

Mrs. Quigg looked at him gratefully through her tears. "But I don't see why he doesn't come back, unless something dreadful has happened to him."

While this examination of Mrs. Quigg was proceeding the Berrington Boys' Association was holding an excited session. Helen had told Ben Smith all that she had gleaned from her conversation with Mrs. Quigg. Ben had communicated the information to the boys and a conference had been called in

the stock room. Ben was acting as chairman.

"You know, fellows," he began when the boys had talked themselves out on the general aspects of the situation, "I think we ought to do something about this. This here club was started by Quigg and Garson and it was the idea that it would help a guy out when he got into any trouble. Well, if these two guys aren't in trouble then I don't know what trouble is. Now are we going to do our part or not?"

"What can we do?" Frank Lockwood asked. "I'd be for doing something if I could think of anything."

"Any of you know this here Westvale?" Ben ignored Frank's question.

No one did.

"Well, I don't know as that makes much difference anyhow. I was thinking, here we are," he looked around the circle, counting, "ten of us, and there's four or five more that would come in on a thing like this. What do you say to taking a hike out to Westvale and prowling around? Sort of a search party. 'Twould be good sport and if there was anything to be found there I bet you we

could find it. This is Saturday and we've got the afternoon off."

"If you want to go with the idea of making a picnic out of it, all right," Lockwood agreed. "Nothing would come of it, so far as Jimmy and Fred are concerned."

"Pipe down, pipe down," some one sang out. "Let's go and make something come of it."

"What do you say to getting Bertrand Owens to go along, too?" Ben asked.

No objection was raised.

"He's a pretty good scout and he might have ideas. You know you got to have ideas in this detective business," Ben explained. "Well, then," he continued, "it's settled we go this afternoon. I'll get the dope on the trains and all that sort of thing. We got to put this club on the map and we'll sure do it if we have a hand in explaining this great mystery," he ended pompously.

A few minutes later he explained the plan to Bertrand.

"Bully!" Bertrand ejaculated. "That just fits in with my arrangements. I'm going to see the police in Westvale right now and get them on the job,

and then I'll meet you this afternoon and we'll see what we can do, provided Westvale's cops haven't cleared the thing all up before you fellows get out there."

"It would be too bad if they had," Ben observed.

Bertrand greeted his remark with a laugh. "Looks to me as though you were doing it more for the fun of the chase then for clearing Jimmy."

Ben flushed. "No, I'm not," he protested. "Still I don't mind saying I'm anticipating it. Anyhow, I guess the cops won't do anything. It'll be up to us," he finished dryly.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN THE OLD CELLAR

**M**EANWHILE Jimmy Quigg endured mental torture of the worst kind as he thought how worried his mother would be at his absence. He had plenty of time to consider the situation too, for Alex left him undisturbed for half a day in the dark room into which he had thrust him, along with Pete.

He wondered if it was going to turn out to be the profitless expedition his mother had said it would be when she had objected to his going. Even if it did, he wouldn't be sorry, barring his regret at the deception of his mother, that he had come. He would have the satisfaction of knowing that he had tried to help Fred. Besides he loved adventure, and the prospect was that he would have his full share of it before he was through! He was not frightened at the outlook, nor was Pete. They

were both confident that, given a chance, they could escape from the net in which they now seemed entangled. Locked up in a windowless room, no amount of ingenuity could help them, but once they were taken from their prison, they were sure they could find some avenue of escape.

The pain in Jimmy's ankle grew less and it was not long before he could walk up and down in his tiny cell without great discomfort. There was ever with him the thought that he must communicate with his mother. It was on the anxiety which he knew she must be feeling that his mind chiefly dwelt, rather than on his own predicament.

After what seemed an interminable period, they heard the lock turn. The door was flung open and the light rushed in, almost blinding them.

Alex stood there.

"Come on out," he said. "I've given you time enough now to think it all over." They followed him up the hall and into the room where they had been the night before. There they found Fred eating some bread and canned fish.

"If you want lunch, there you are," Alex pointed to the remains of a loaf of bread on the table and

to some sardines uninvitingly displayed in a tin can.

"I'm not hungry," Jimmy answered.

"Better eat while you've got the chance," Alex advised.

Jimmy was not to be tempted, but Pete helped himself generously to the food.

Alex turned to Jimmy. "If you don't want to eat you can talk. Are you ready to tell me what you were doing around this place?"

"You saw what I was doing, didn't you? Looking in."

"I'd advise you, young man, to keep civil." There was a menacing note in Alex's voice.

"Aw, what's the use?" Pete interrupted. "He knows what we were here for. We was looking for Fred Garson; we're pals of his. What's the idea of making so many words about something that ain't no secret? We just had the bad luck to get caught before we could get away and spoil your little game."

"Thank you," Alex said. "You've saved me a lot of trouble and I'll be just as frank with you. As I was fortunate enough to catch you I'll keep you — for a while, anyway."

"That ain't no news to us," Pete observed; "it wouldn't be safe for you not to keep us."

"We now understand each other perfectly. I trust there will be no hard feelings if I am forced to confine you rather closely. It may not be for long, I hope it won't be, but until I can get several things attended to, I shall have to remain here, with you as my guests."

Alex walked to the windows. "You will observe," he said, "that these two windows open to the north. I command from my workshop below a good view of the patch of ground upon which they look out. I would not advise any one, therefore, to try to escape by way of the windows. The door," he walked to it, opened it, put the key on the outside, "I will lock. The hall door is locked and the key is in my pocket. I shall expect to see you later." He nodded and shut the door. They heard the key turn and then his steps down the outside stairs.

Fred broke the silence that followed his departure.

"What in blazes made you do it, Quigg? I don't get the idea at all. I don't see how you found us anyway."

"Finding was easy enough," Pete said, "a whole lot easier'n it'll be getting away from you."

But Fred's eyes were on Jimmy. "What did you do it for?" he repeated.

"Oh, for the fun of the thing," Jimmy replied, adding casually, "and because I knew you didn't steal the bonds."

"What makes you think I didn't steal 'em?" Fred's expressionless tone gave not the slightest hint of his emotion.

"I just simply knew, that's all." Jimmy's tone was equally expressionless.

Fred said nothing, but turned his back and walked to the window.

"What gets me," Pete again thrust himself forward, "is, how we're going to get away? Gee! I'll bet my boss had a few things to say about me this morning."

"And mine, too," Jimmy added, little realizing the full significance of his comment.

"Is it so," Jimmy asked of Fred, "that he's down where he could see us if we climbed out of these windows?"

"Yes, it's no use," Fred said discouragingly, "you can't get away from him."

"Don't you believe it! We'll get away. Just give us time and if one of us can escape and alarm the neighborhood there'll be something doing. Only I think we'll have to go a mile or two before we find any neighborhood to alarm."

Pete walked up and tried the handle of the inside door. "It's locked all right, all right," he said. "Where's it go to?"

"Into the hall."

"Is there an outside door there?"

"Not any more. There used to be, but that part of the house is all in ruins now and you can't get through. But there's a stairway leading down into the cellar and there's an outside cellar door on the other side of the house."

Pete studied the hall door. "It's pretty weak," he said. "If it weren't for the racket it would make, you could pull it right away from the frame, lock and all, but that would arouse our friend Alex, if he's really around."

"He's around all right," Fred assured him, "and will be here at the least noise."

Pete dug into his pocket. "Don't suppose there's a chance in the world my key'll fit, but ——" He inserted the key as he spoke and turned it half-way around. "Almost, boys," he said excitedly. He withdrew the key, examined it, and inserted it again, testing the action of the lock carefully.

"Got a file?" he asked quickly. "Got a knife with a file blade?"

Jimmy produced one.

Pete carefully filed the key for a moment and then tried it once more. The lock turned.

Pete locked the door, withdrew the key, and put it in his pocket. "Don't intend to run any chances. We'll keep locked up until we get our plans made. Now, then, what's to be done?"

"Why not open the door and all of us get out?" Fred asked.

"I don't know . . ." Pete hesitated. "It seems to me it might be better for just one to go. One wouldn't be likely to make so much noise as three. What do you say, Jimmy?"

"I think so, too, only it'll be hard for those that are left if Alex comes back before help arrives."

"Alex won't be back," Fred reassured him, "for

a couple of hours, not unless something disturbs him. He always stays that long in the afternoon."

"That would give one of us plenty of time," Pete spoke quickly, "to bring help. I think it's up to you, Jimmy Quigg."

"I'm ready to go," Jimmy agreed. "What's the quickest way to town?"

Fred gave him a few simple directions as to how to reach the more thickly settled sections of Westvale. Then Pete unlocked the door and Jimmy stepped into the hall. With a final silent salute to his friends he made his way cautiously toward the stairway at the other end and disappeared.

He made the descent successfully, not even a board creaking under his weight. At the foot of the stairs he paused, in doubt as to which way to go. There were several patches of gray light, any one of which might have been the opening that had been described to him. Fred had said the exit was on the south side. But which was the south?

The cellar was dark, only a little light filtering in through what had once been windows, but which were now partially obstructed by fallen masonry on the inside or overgrown with vines and weeds on the

outside. The cellar itself was filled with wreckage — old boxes, papers, piles of earth, and plaster and bricks, the accumulation of years of disintegration.

Jimmy, finally regaining his sense of direction, made for the grayish splotch of light which he had decided must mark the exit he was seeking.

After stumbling along for fifteen or twenty feet over the rough floor and marveling that he did not noisily upset something, to his undoing, he stopped short with the distinct feeling that he was not alone. His eyes searched the darkness, but he could see nothing, and he had about decided that it was only imagination when he heard something. This time there was no doubt of it. It sounded like the hum of a machine, reminding him of his mother's sewing machine when she was running it very fast. It stopped. A man spoke and Alex replied.

Jimmy was afraid to move, fearing that the next step might bring him within range of the vision of those he most desired to avoid. Realizing, however, that delay was fatal, he moved on. A few feet farther and he rounded a great mound of débris only to come upon an open space, at the other end of which, working under carefully shaded lights,

were Alex and another man. He stepped back behind the pile of rubbish and waited. Apparently they had not seen or heard him. He stuck his head cautiously forward and fastened his eyes upon the men at their work. After a few moments there dawned upon him the full realization of what he was witnessing. At first he could hardly believe that his interpretation of the scene was the right one, but the snatches of conversation which reached his ears removed all doubt of that.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE ESCAPE

JIMMY figured that there were about twenty feet between him and escape. A short stretch of shadow, a bright spot where the light fell through the door from the room where Alex and his companion were working, another patch of darkness fading off into grayness as it approached the opening that was to bring freedom. It was all perfectly easy except for the few steps that he must take into the light. There was the chance that he might be discovered then and yet there was no way in which he could avoid crossing it. When he had made quite certain of that, he crept forward. He simply must get out now. What he had seen of the operations of the two men made it imperative!

But he was too cautious. Hugging the wall, in order that he might keep out of the dreaded brilliancy from the doorway as long as possible, his eyes ahead rather than on his immediate surroundings,

his foot caught in a jagged bit of rock that protruded from the crumbling foundation. He stumbled, made a valiant effort to regain his equilibrium, failed, and sprawled full length right in the center of the light spot he had been seeking to avoid.

There was a muffled cry from the other room.

"What's that?" Alex rushed in followed by his assistant.

By this time Jimmy was on his feet lurching toward the opening.

"You!" Alex exclaimed. "How the devil'd you get here?" He lunged for Jimmy's collar, missed it by a fraction of an inch, cursed, and made savagely for the boy who was nearing the exit, a half caved-in doorway from which three or four steps led up and out. Jimmy reached the steps, took two of them at a bound, and then the top one. Alex was so close upon him that he could hear his breathing. He was frightened; it seemed certain that he would be caught, but —

The Berrington Boys' Association had come to Westvale, had seen the town, but, unlike Cæsar, had not conquered it. The enemy was still at large. For the first few hours the boys had enjoyed stroll-

ing around the little suburb, imagining that every unexplored street would offer a clue, that every suspicious-looking individual was an accomplice. But a few hours had sufficed to quench their enthusiasm for the search. Some of the boys realized, for the first time, that it was a hopeless errand on which they had set out. Others admitted that they had never had any expectation of success, but that they had planned the expedition simply for the fun of the thing.

"It's been a good hike," Lockwood observed, "and that's what we wanted."

"Well, I'm kind of disappointed," Ben Smith admitted, "not to have had anything exciting happen. I thought even if we didn't see anything of Quigg and the others we might get a false lead or two that it would be fun following up."

"Even the police haven't any clues," Bertrand remarked. "The cop I talked to at the station house said they'd run down everything and were just as much in the dark as ever, and that they were beginning to think the whole story was bunk."

"If we had the time I'll bet we could solve it," a fourth member of the party volunteered; "we'd

have to search most every house, but we'd get there."

"Yes," Ben sneered, "but what do you s'pose the crooks would be doing while you was searching? They'd soon get wind of that business and light out. I've had enough! I move we go home."

"Might as well," Bertrand agreed, "but I feel as if it were leaving old Jimmy in the lurch somehow."

They were strolling, as they talked, up a country road that wound and twisted, now through bare flat lands, now through wooded areas. It was just the sort of road that would tempt one for an afternoon's walk, away from evidences of civilization, cool, fragrant, inviting when the sun was still high, but a far different road at night. Then it was dark and sinister — as Pete and Jimmy could have told them.

Even as they were bewailing the futility of their errand the members of the Berrington Boys' Association were coming nearer and nearer to the moment when they could serve, if they would but see the opportunity and grasp it. An open stretch of ground underneath low-branching trees was too much of a temptation for their tired bodies. Almost as one they threw themselves down and stretched full length in the inviting shade.

"Gee, look at the ruin!" Lockwood drawled, nodding lazily toward the structure that had once housed the proud family of a general of the Revolution.

The others turned indifferent eyes in the direction which he indicated.

"'Twould be a good scene for a murder," Ben Smith grunted. "Maybe right here our man is hiding, who knows? I'll say we ought to investigate."

"Investigate nothing," Lockwood replied. "If I can get back to the depot I'll think I'm lucky. Must have walked twenty miles! Got blisters on my feet's big as dollars."

"Don't believe anybody could live in there very long, anyhow. A brick falls most every minute, I should think, judging by the piles of 'em all around," another added. "Must have been some castle long about Noah's time."

Thus the conversation ran for a quarter of an hour while the boys rested. Outside, this calm tranquillity; inside, a fight for life.

When Jimmy took that last step and shot out

free of the house and paused for just the fraction of a second, not knowing which way to turn, his eyes lit upon the figures underneath the trees. He blinked, looked again, and then, as he heard Alex coming up after him, he ran in the direction of the boys; but in that pause Alex had almost caught up with him. Jimmy, feeling his fingers on his coat, let out a wild yell, thinking that he had been captured and intending that whoever it was down there in the shade should know of his presence. The yell had the effect of a thunderclap from a clear sky. Thirteen young men, none of whom had happened to be looking in the direction of the house at that particular moment, sprang up. Jimmy saw them, he recognized Bertrand and Ben Smith, he knew that, in some miraculous and altogether inexplicable way, help had come.

“Oh, you Quigg!” Ben Smith called out, and then there were several boys running quickly toward him. Alex, after one startled look at the army of newcomers, turned and fled to the cellar.

Jimmy was breathless when he came up to the group of his friends.

“I don’t know how you came here or — or any-

thing about it," he panted. "And I want to know, 'cause if you hadn't happened to be around I guess I would have seen my finish. But first, we must get them locked up. Do you know what they're doing in there? Planning to blow up some rich man's home. I saw them working and I heard them talk. They're making bombs! Dozens of them!"

"Garson?"

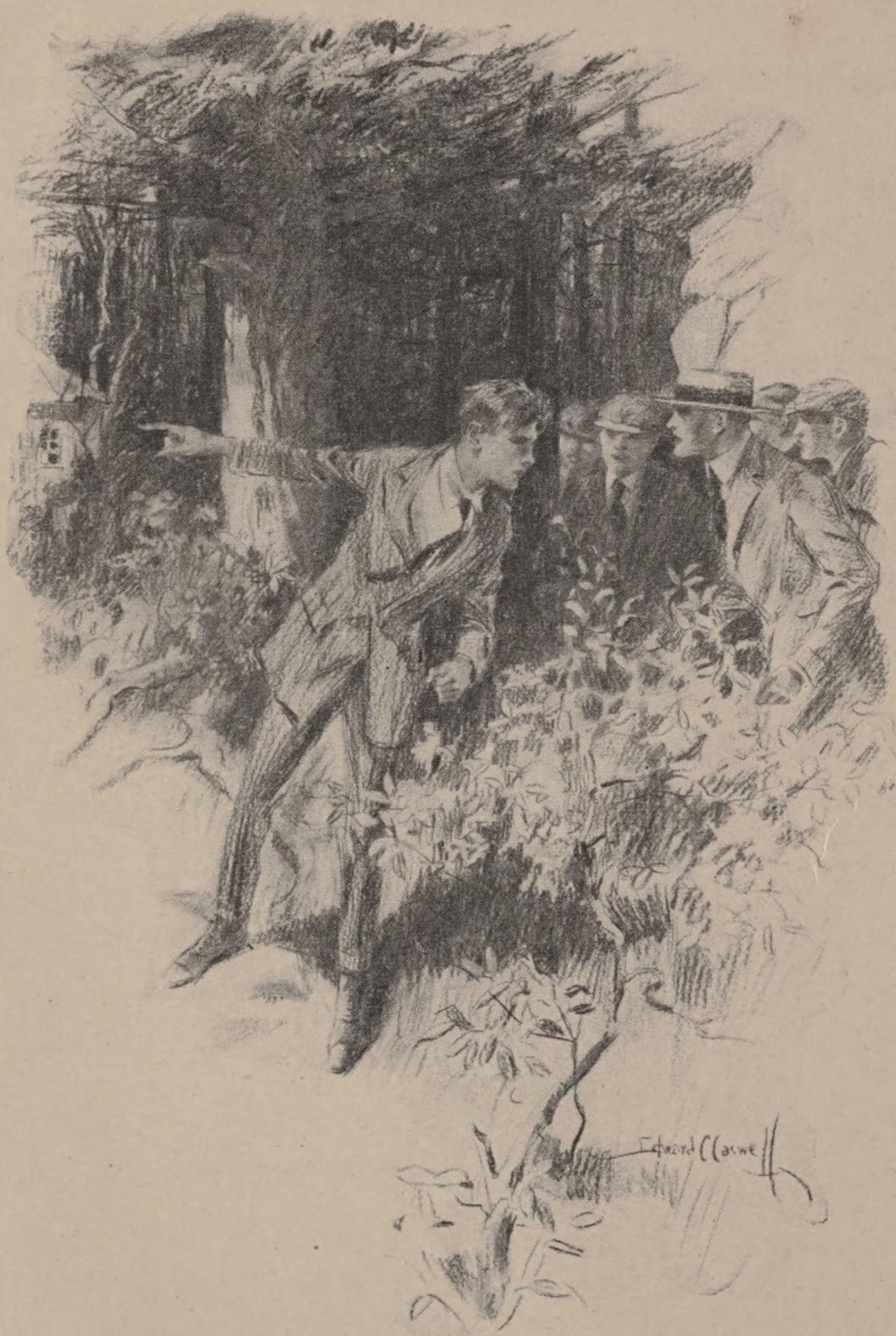
"Garson is in there, a prisoner, like I was, but I'll tell you all about it later. Now, then, how are we going to get the police here before they escape?" Jimmy turned to Bertrand as one who, because of his superior years, should suggest the plan.

Bertrand thought a moment.

"There are fourteen of us here," he said at length. "Take one away, that would be thirteen. We've got to surround the place while the other one runs for the cops. "Here, you kid," and he grasped one of the boys by the arm, "can you run?"

"Bet your life."

"Well, you leg it back to town just as fast as you can, and see that you lose no time in getting here with Westvale's entire police force. Be off!" He



Jimmy was breathless when he came up to the group of his friends



gave the youngster a shove and the boy was soon lost to sight up the road.

"We've got to watch out," Jimmy warned, "or these guys here will make a get-away."

"Yes, quick, scatter right around the house," Bertrand commanded. "And if any one of you sees anything doing or has the slightest suspicion, holler like blazes! Anybody afraid?"

"Not afraid exactly," Ben Smith said, "but I was looking for something exciting. Humph! Well, I got my wish."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BOYS ON GUARD

IT was a silent guard that stationed itself around the ruined house. The boys were too excited to talk. Their eyes were strained to catch every movement, they jumped at the rustling of twigs and the singing of the wind through the long grass. Every shadow held a possible lurking figure, around every corner there was mystery.

Some of the boys, had the truth been told, were a bit frightened, but they successfully concealed their fears and put on a brave front. Yet one or two of the older lads realized that they would be powerless to prevent the escape of a desperate criminal should he make the effort.

When, after a few moments, nothing happened, the more timorous grew bolder, while those who had longed for an engagement with the enemy became suspicious of the quiet. The silence seemed ominous. What was going on within those crumbling

walls? Surely something must be, for it was impossible to believe that a man such as the boys knew was hidden there would submit to capture without a fight.

On the other hand, could he get away without giving some sign?

"Gee, I wish something would happen," Lockwood said to Ben who stood near him. "This is awful, waiting here for hours with your eyes glued on that old shack."

"Hours nothing," Ben retorted, consulting his watch. "Bob's been gone only twenty minutes."

"Seems like ten times twenty to me," Lockwood replied, and the same sentiment was shared by the thirteen others.

"Each minute is a week and ten days long," one of the boys commented dryly, his eyes never roving from the area for which he was responsible, but his ears keenly alert for sounds up the road in back of him.

But the sounds, when they came, did not come from "up the road." Suddenly, without warning, a gunshot broke the country silence followed by a dull explosion in front of the ruins and a shower of

bricks and dirt. The boys on the side where the disturbance began ran from their posts and joined their ranks to those of the guard on the south. They were now really frightened, and even the leaders, Bertrand and Ben, advised retreat to a safe distance.

"They must have cannon in there," one of the younger members of the party said. "I'm not going to stay here and have 'em turn broadsides like that on me."

Another shot and whatever last lingering doubt the more adventuresome among them may have had as to the wisdom of forsaking their self-imposed tasks vanished. They fled a quarter of a mile up the road.

"Think this is far enough?" Ben panted.

"Sure, you granny," Lockwood replied, "unless they decide to follow us."

Such was far from the intention of Alex and his companion. They had tried the old trick of men at bay and it had succeeded far better than they had hoped. Shots had been fired into the air and a small bomb exploded among the ruins with the sole idea of fixing the attention of the boys upon one side of

the house, thus opening up an avenue for escape on the other side. Alex had so planned it that the side which would be free of boys and of boys' surveillance was toward the woods.

It was Bertrand who discovered how the incident was working out. While he had sought safety with the others he still kept at a point where the house and its surroundings were within view. His watchfulness was rewarded.

"There they go, boys; see them? Look! Quick!"

Lockwood, Ben and the others who had heard Bertrand's remark rushed to him and followed his pointing finger.

"Down there between the house and the trees. They're making for the woods. What do you say, shall we go after them?"

"Not on your life," Lockwood replied. "I've had all the gun play for this afternoon I want. I'm not exactly used to being shot at."

"I don't think they were shooting at us. They were just making that confusion to scare us off so they could sneak away. But I don't know as we'd better follow them," Bertrand concluded, "though

I hate to see them just walking right away from us like this."

"But Garson and Pete aren't there," Jimmy said.

"That's so," Bertrand agreed. "They must have left them behind. Well, we can go up to the house and see about that anyhow."

"I'm willing to wait a while to do even that," Ben Smith confessed. "I'd like to know what's doing up there and all that, but better be safe than sorry, I say."

"Oh, you Smitty! I thought you was a lion slayer and all that," some one called out, and there was a general laugh at Ben's expense.

"I thought I was, too," Ben admitted sheepishly, "'til I heard them shots."

Considerably less than an hour after the messenger's departure, an automobile was heard coming up the road and a minute later it appeared in a cloud of dust around the bend.

"Here they come! Here they come!" one lad joyfully cried out. "Three cheers! Three cheers for the four cops and the 'Tin Lizzie' and Bob."

The tension broke, the cheers were given, and then all was hurry and confusion.

Bertrand tried to take command of the situation. "Fall back, boys! Let me talk to the officers."

The boys obeyed — in part. They fell back, but they all talked at once. It was only when one of the bluecoats, the biggest and burliest of the group, demanded gruffly that they "Shut up and allow this fellow to do the talking," indicating Bertrand, that they gave the slightest heed.

Bertrand quickly reviewed the events of the last half hour. "And they've got away and are hiding down in the woods somewhere," he concluded, "all except the two boys. We think they're still up in the house."

He had hardly finished when three of the policemen started on a run for the woods, the fourth heading for the house. The boys straggled along after him, casting skeptical glances toward the woods.

"You stay here," the policeman said, when they came up to the house, "and I'll go inside and see what I can see."

The boys were very glad to follow his instructions.

They had little desire to go within, even in the company of so robust a defender.

A quarter of an hour passed. The policeman returned. "The others have not come back?" he asked.

Bertrand shook his head. "Did you find Fred and Pete inside?"

"I don't know whether I found Fred and Pete, or not," the officer answered. "I've got two kids. They was locked up in a room. I think I'll keep 'em in here."

"Do you suppose the cops'll land the villains?" Ben asked eagerly.

"The police," the man answered severely, "always get the criminal. The *police*, young man; don't call 'em cops. Maybe we won't get 'em to-day, but to-morrow or the next day, it makes no special difference which. Here comes one of our men now." He pushed past the boys to the approaching officer.

"See anything of them?" the first one asked.

"No, not a sign; looks as if they'd made good their get-away, but we want to stay here and scour the place."

"What about the boys I found inside?"

"Take 'em down to the station house and report the whole affair. We've got to have some more help up here. We can't let these birds slip through our fingers. Have four additional men sent up at once. I'm going back to the woods. You report there as soon as you can." He nodded and hurried off.

Bertrand stepped up to the policeman who remained. "Must you really take Fred to the station? Can't he come home with me? I'll be responsible for him."

"You heard my orders," the man replied.

"I'm going down with you, then. I'm representing the company that's involved in this matter. The police sergeant knows all about it and I think he'll fix it up for me."

The policeman went into the house, returning a moment later with Fred and Pete.

There was a chorus of greetings for Fred: "Hello, old man;" "Glad to see you;" "Oh, you Garson!" "'Lo, you Freddie!"

Similar words of welcome were called out to Pete, who was known to several.

The two lads were surrounded by their friends, eager for all the news at once. The policeman allowed them to talk for a few minutes and then told them they would have to start for the town.

The boys perceived a great change in Garson and they were unable to understand it. He had always been happiest when attracting most attention, he had rejoiced in banter. Now he barely acknowledged their salutations, he was surly and scornful. He replied to questions in monosyllables, and finally, when they pressed him for information, he broke out hotly with: "Oh, leave me alone, can't you?"

"Whatever's got into Garson, anyhow?" Ben asked, coming abreast of Jimmy.

"He'll come around all right after a time," Jimmy replied. "He's been through a lot and doesn't know just where he stands."

"Yes," Ben agreed, "but so have you been through a lot and you can still talk decent to a fellow."

"It's different with me. It wasn't my folks that got mixed up in this thing. While Alex isn't exactly Fred's folks, he's about as near it as anybody Fred ever had. I wouldn't want a lot of guys hang-

ing around me with a million questions if I'd been up against it the way he has."

"I suppose so," Ben agreed, though not wholeheartedly.

In a few moments they arrived at the station house where it was, as Bertrand had thought it would be, an easy matter to arrange for Fred's release. A word from the sergeant over the telephone to Mr. Berrington, another to Fred, and the deed was done.

"May be a little irregular," the police officer said, "but it's perfectly safe; I can see that."

It was six o'clock when the boys got back to the city. Just after the ferryboat landed and before they separated to go in different directions toward their homes, Jimmy thanked them for what they had done.

"It was great," he said, "and we won't forget it, Fred and I, and Pete, too."

"That bomb business is all that's worrying me now. That's still a pretty serious proposition," Bertrand remarked. "The bombing may be put

through even yet, you know. We haven't landed Alex."

Jimmy sobered. "I'd forgotten that for the moment," he confessed. "But didn't they leave all their junk behind?" he asked.

Bertrand shook his head. "There wasn't a sign of anything. It wouldn't seem as though they could have taken much with them. I suppose most likely they hid it, or destroyed it. But if they've got the will to do a thing like that and are at large they'll find a way to do it even if they have to begin all over again."

"The police will simply have to catch 'em then, that's all. They'll simply have to," Jimmy said. "Gee, I wish we might have done it."

They fell into silence for several blocks, except for the occasional "good nights" that were called out as they came to the parting of the ways. At last only three remained together — Jimmy, Bertrand, and Fred.

"I've got to hurry up and get home," Jimmy said. "I'll just bet mother's been worrying about me."

"She sure has," Bertrand agreed. "I saw her and I know."

Jimmy flushed. His conscience had troubled him a lot on that score.

There was a moment of constraint, and then Fred somewhat doggedly asked: "What about me? Can I go where I please?"

Jimmy glanced at Bertrand. He did not know just how seriously the police sergeant's remark that he would hold Bertrand responsible for Garson was to be taken.

"I'd like Fred to stay with me over Sunday," Jimmy said. "I don't suppose Mr. Berrington will want to see us until Monday."

"That's the way 'twas left when we phoned from the station house. The first thing Monday we'll have our session in his office." Bertrand looked troubled, and Jimmy noted that he had not replied to his question.

"Perhaps you'd like Fred to go with you," Jimmy suggested.

Fred broke in impatiently: "Oh, what's the idea? Do you think I'm going to slip away from you?" Although he made a brave effort at his old-time defiance there was behind it all something undeniably pathetic.

Bertrand clapped him on the shoulder. "Buck up, old man! Of course you can spend the weekend with Quigg, if you like. Why shouldn't you? And I'll see you both Monday morning. Here's my corner — so long," and Bertrand was off, appreciating that his father and Mr. Berrington might criticize him for his leniency, but knowing full well that he had done the right thing. "The poor little beggar'd be mighty uncomfortable if he had to stick around with me," he muttered to himself.

"Now for home," Jimmy said as he and Fred swung off up the street.

"*Your* home," Fred said significantly.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHILE he had thought that his mother would be worried at his long absence and hurt at his deception of her, Jimmy had really had little idea of the mental torture she had suffered in the hours that he had been away. She had never for a moment, of course, questioned his honesty, but as the day passed and he did not return she had become more and more certain that he had met with foul play.

When Jimmy flung open the hall door, singing out, "Hello, mother!" and caught sight of her as she sat at the front window, the full realization of his thoughtlessness was borne in upon him.

Mrs. Quigg rose unsteadily and took a step forward. Jimmy ran to her, thoroughly frightened at her white, drawn features.

"It's all right, mother," he said, though a sud-

den pain in his throat almost cut off the words. "It's turned out just as I said it would. We got Fred—see?" And he pointed toward Garson who stood hesitatingly in the background.

Mrs. Quigg had kept up bravely during her long night and day of agony, but now she sank down weakly into a chair and sobbed. Jimmy dropped to his knees beside her. "Why, what's the matter, mother?" he asked. "Now that I am back, why do you cry?"

"Oh, Jimmy, I have been so worried," Mrs. Quigg made an effort to control herself. "Why did you do it and against my wishes, too? I didn't think you'd go that way."

"I had to, mother, it was my duty. . . . I hope you won't feel so bad when I tell you how it all turned out. I'm sorry you were worried. I didn't want you to be; you know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but another time you mustn't be so thoughtless. However, there won't be another time, Jimmy Quigg; don't you forget it." There was a partial return of Mrs. Quigg's accustomed snap. "Why, besides being worried to death I had to go up to the office and tell about you. They

thought you had something to do with the robbery."

"Yes, I know, Bertrand told me. He didn't tell me, though, that you'd been up there. Suppose he thought that would get me excited."

"Bertrand told you? When did you see him?"

"Oh, that's all part of the story, and when I tell it all to you I know you'll forgive me and not be sorry I went. It had pretty good results." He motioned to Garson. "Fred, come here."

Fred advanced from the shadow of the doorway.

"Mother, this is Fred Garson. I brought him to stay with us over Sunday. You don't mind, do you?"

It must be admitted that Mrs. Quigg at first was inclined to feel a certain antipathy toward Fred as the one who was responsible for all the trouble, but there was such an unhappy look in his eyes that her mother heart went out to him almost as soon as the boy stepped forward.

"How do you do, Fred?" she said. "Of course you may stay here, if you and Jimmy desire it." Then relenting a bit, "I—I shall be glad to have you."

At the supper table, Jimmy rehearsed the events

since his early-morning departure, while Mrs. Quigg listened with wide-eyed amazement.

"And they didn't catch him, after all? Oh, what a pity!" she observed, as Jimmy finished his story with an account of Alex's escape.

"No, he isn't caught yet, but he will be; we'll get him soon."

Mrs. Quigg's eyes snapped. "*We'll* nothing," she said. "You just leave yourself out of any further doings. *They'll* get him, maybe. *You'll* have nothing to do with it."

Even Fred laughed at Mrs. Quigg's vehemence.

"All right, mother, I'm through," Jimmy agreed.

"You needn't tell me that," Mrs. Quigg answered. "I know it."

Fred had as yet told Jimmy nothing of the particulars of the robbery, and his silence began to puzzle his friend. On Sunday afternoon, when the boys were out for a walk, Jimmy gave him several excellent opportunities, but Fred ignored them. At last Jimmy said:

"Are you ever going to tell me exactly what happened the day you disappeared?"

"I suppose I'll have to," Fred replied curtly.

"Should think you'd want to. Of course I know you didn't have anything to do with the stealing of the stuff yourself, but I would like to know what was doing."

"Can't you wait until to-morrow? I'll have to tell it all then and once is plenty."

Jimmy turned away, hurt at Fred's attitude. He had little idea of his companion's mental turmoil. It seemed to Fred almost as though the bottom had dropped out of the universe. The ideals of the man whom he had come to regard in the light of a father were apparently not ideals at all in the eyes of those who knew and counted; they stood for dis-honor and crime and wreckage. Yet it was hard to admit this. Alex was all that he had ever had to tie to. It was difficult to sever the connection that held him to the old associations, to the old ways of thinking. He saw, however, that he must do it — that he must renounce his people; that there was no other solution. He chose it not from any sudden burst of knowledge that he had been on the wrong side of the equation, but rather because he realized that it was the only way he could save him-

self, and to look out for one's self had always been the first rule in the game, even in Alex's kind of game.

Promptly at nine o'clock the next morning, Jimmy and Fred and Bertrand met at Mr. Berrington's door.

"He wants us to come right in," Bertrand said. "They're waiting for us."

"Good morning, young gentlemen," Mr. Berrington said not unkindly as the trio came in. "I have been hearing something of your experiences through Mr. Owens, but there are several important omissions which I should like you to supply. You are Fred Garson, I suppose?" Mr. Berrington gave the boy a shrewd, quick glance.

"Yes."

"While we know of your rescue and the subsequent details of the situation, information is lacking as to why you disappeared and as to what happened to the money you had with you when you left." Mr. Berrington paused.

"Alex got it." The boy spoke the words almost as though making a confession of personal guilt.

"Alex! Who is he? The anarchist bomb maker you were telling me about?" turning to Bertrand.

"Yes, sir."

"Well," Mr. Berrington continued, "how did Alex get it? How did he know that you had it?"

"I — I told him."

"Now we are getting down to something. You told him, with the idea that he would take it away from you?" Mr. Berrington leaned forward expectantly for the reply.

There was silence for a full moment; then, "Please, sir, Alex was sort of good to me and it's hard —" Fred paused.

"Come, come!" Mr. Berrington interrupted.

"Alex was the boy's father, you know, or at least the only father he had," Mr. Owens explained.

"Yes? That's too bad," Mr. Berrington said, "but that is no reason why we shouldn't straighten this thing out. We have been too lenient as it is. Well, young man, are you ready?"

"If you think I stole it you're wrong, though I don't see as I'd be any worse off if I had. I didn't tell Alex about it, either, so as he'd steal it.

I didn't know then he'd do anything like that."

"But why did you tell him?"

"'Cause I liked the sound of it. I liked to see them open their eyes when I told 'em I was going to have all that cash on me."

"When did you tell them about it?" Mr. Berrington asked.

"The night before."

A light began to dawn on Mr. Berrington. "Oh, ho! You boasted that you'd have big sums in your possession at a certain time the next day; is that it?"

"Yes."

"And this man met you and took it away from you and you were afraid to come back and tell us; is that it?"

"He took it away from me, but he took me, too, and I couldn't come back. Please, please don't make me answer any more questions. Lock me up or send me away or do anything you like, only don't make me talk about it."

"Well, I guess you needn't talk any more just now," Mr. Berrington spoke more kindly than he

had before. "Suppose you go back to work for a while, all three of you, while I think this thing over."

"I?" Fred interrupted, his eyes brightening a trifle. "I go back to work? At my old job?"

"Yes, guess you might as well for the present. And you too, Quigg; unless you've decided to join the Burns detective agency."

After the boys had left the room, Mr. Berrington turned to Mr. Owens, "Do you know, I couldn't help liking the way that lad tried to be loyal to his folks. He'd make a good American if he had a chance, if he were shown the big things and the right ideals to which he ought to be loyal."

## CHAPTER XIX

### FRED VISITS PROMISE HALL

IT was some days after Jimmy's great adventure before he was able to visit Promise Hall, but at length came the night when he was free to go.

"Don't you want to go with me?" he asked of Fred, who was now living with the Quiggs on a fairly permanent arrangement, having accepted their suggestion that he share Jimmy's room and contribute to the household treasury as board money a small weekly sum.

"No, not to-night, I'm going down to the O. B. L. Haven't seen the bunch for the dickens of a time."

Jimmy protested. "Shouldn't think you'd want to see them. I haven't any use for that crowd. You wouldn't have, either, if —" He stopped, wondering if it were wise, after all, to tell Fred of the effort that had been made to enlist the O. B. L. in his behalf.

"If what?" Fred asked.

Jimmy saw that he had gone too far to retreat. "If you knew how they acted when I tried to get them to look you up."

"Probably I would be sore," Fred returned somewhat bitterly, "but don't tell me about it. What's the use?"

"You come along with me and forget the O. B. L.," Jimmy began again, but Fred checked him.

"You've got a girl up there, haven't you? You don't want me along, anyhow. I'll go some other time."

Jimmy seized upon the words. "Very good, I'll hold you to that."

In the days of Jimmy's absence the "building of the ship" had progressed rapidly. The hull of the miniature vessel was now complete and the amateur carpenters were being given directions as to the mast and rigging. The boys' enthusiasm had mounted as the boat began to take shape before their eyes. They had been brought into more intimate relations with one period of American life than they realized. Wholly unsuspected interests had been awakened, and several of the young workers were

finding history a far more entertaining subject than they had supposed it could be.

"What are we going to do next?" Jimmy asked the boy nearest him. "This job is nearly finished."

"You've been missing it," came the irrelevant answer. "Where have you been?"

"Away! But I say, what are we going to do next?"

"We're the construction division. We've got to always be building things. Next we build a setting for Washington's inauguration."

"Are they going to have that?"

"Yes! And they're going to have the assassination of Lincoln, and a scene in front of a plantation cabin when the slaves are set free, and something from the war with Germany and lots of other things besides."

And so Promise Hall's pageant "America" grew, a panorama of the high lights in American history worked out by boys and girls of every nationality to whom that history was an unread book and who, as they hammered and sawed and cut and painted, grasped for the first time something of the ideals which had actuated the founders and which had

guided those who had followed them in the shaping of American destiny.

"First I'm an Indian and then I'm a little slave girl — that's because I've got my face all stained up for being an Indian — and then I'm a Red Cross nurse, and at the end I'm just one of the crowd," Helen confided to Jimmy one night on their way home. "I've got plenty of time to make the changes. What are you going to be?"

"One of Columbus' sailors and a boy in khaki; that's all I know about," Jimmy replied.

"Of course, you'll be in the end; everybody's in that."

"That's what they all say, but what's the end?"

"I don't know exactly, myself," Helen answered. "I know we all go on and march off, but I don't know what we're supposed to be. They'll tell us in time, though. Is Fred Garson going to be in it?"

"I guess not. He keeps saying he'll come down with me some night, but he never seems to. He's always going over to the Office Boys' League."

"They haven't found Alex yet, have they?"

"No," Jimmy said. "I think that bothers

Fred, too. He sort of feels that until they get him he's kind of under suspicion, though Mr. Berrington told him he didn't hold him responsible any more. He gave him a terrible stiff talking to, however, about giving away company information. You see if Fred hadn't had so much to say he wouldn't have got into all that trouble."

"No, nor would you, but then"—and Helen smiled at him shyly—"you wouldn't have been able to show what a fine detective you are and what a hero."

"What are you doing? Jollying me? Don't talk that way. I'm no hero;" but though he denied it he liked to hear the words from Helen.

It was not until the day before the presentation of the pageant that Fred was finally induced to visit Promise Hall.

"You must go to-night," Jimmy had said at supper time, and Fred had capitulated without his usual arguments and excuses.

"We're going right through the thing from start to finish. Of course, there won't be the fancy costumes and all the nice fixings, but it will be interest-

ing and you can sit down in the front row and watch us. I'll tell you the story of it on the way over."

Jimmy's running comment on the meaning of the pageant made up in dramatic quality what it lacked in historical authenticity. It furnished the necessary key to Fred's understanding of the pictures which passed in rapid review before his eyes. He sat almost motionless during the long rehearsal, hundreds of questions rushing upon him. What made Columbus so ready to endure hardships, so eager to push ahead? There wasn't anything in it for him. Why was Washington fighting with the Colonists when he could have had a much easier time on the other side? Why was Lincoln ready to sacrifice everything to set the slaves free? Did these men *really* do these things? Or was this only a story? He had heard, in a vague way, of the events before, but he had never seriously considered them.

His reverie was interrupted by Jimmy's arrival. "That's all we're going to do to-night," Jimmy explained. "That's everything, anyhow, except the grand flare-up at the end. We don't have to rehearse that. How'd you like it?"

"All right. But is it supposed to be true?"

"Why, of course it's true."

"And that Mr. Lincoln, he was just a country boy?"

"Certainly."

"And he did become President and was killed?"

Jimmy regarded Fred with undisguised amazement. "You mean to say you didn't know that?"

"I'd heard it, but I never paid any special attention. You coming home now?"

"Don't you want to look around this place first?"

Fred was really eager to explore the building, but he concealed the fact and expressed outwardly only mild interest in the rooms and their equipment until they came to the gymnasium.

"Gee! I'd like to see if I could work my way across the room on those swinging rings," he said, watching one boy as he swung out and worked from ring to ring until he reached the other side of the room and then, without dropping to the floor, just as easily returned.

"Try it," Jimmy advised. "I can't do it. I have to drop about the middle."

Fred hesitated for a moment and then, with a self-conscious laugh, reached for the first ring.

"Here goes," he said as he pulled himself up and swung out. But after the third ring he dropped and came back somewhat sheepishly. "I thought I could do it. 'Tain't so easy as it looks. I'll bet I could do it if I practiced."

"Join Promise Hall and you can practice all you want to."

"They let you come down here free?"

"Of course they do, if you work in one of the clubs."

"That's it. I knew there was something about it I wouldn't like. What do you mean — work in one of the clubs?"

"Oh, you have to learn to do something. There are debating clubs and good-citizen clubs and clubs where you make things with tools. You can go into the one you like best. Why don't you come in with us?"

"I'll think about it."

On the way home Fred hardly spoke. They had almost come up to the door when he said:

"Let's walk a little while. I've got something I want to think about."

"Can't you think inside? It's getting late."

“No, and I may want to talk.”

Jimmy said nothing, but swung in beside him and they covered several blocks before Fred spoke. Then he burst out with: “I’ll have to do it. Lincoln would have done it and all the rest of ‘em.”

“What are you talking about?”

It was a full minute before Fred answered: “Jimmy, we must stop it and that’s all there is to it. To-morrow’s the day Alex had set for his bombing. I *know*, because I overheard him say once ‘twould be a nice surprise party for Columbus Day.”

“Stop it! I wish we could,” Jimmy agreed. “But how? And where?”

“I — think — we could — all right.” The words came apparently with difficulty. “I know where Alex is.”

“You do? Well, why didn’t you say so before?”

“I only just found out for sure last night. I’ve been watching a place where I knew he used to go to work on — his things.”

“You mean his bombs?”

“I didn’t know that’s what they were then; but I guess there’s no doubt about it. I thought maybe around Columbus Day there might be something do-

ing — and there was last night. It was lit up and he was there; I saw his shadow — I *know!*”

“Did he see you?”

“No, I was out of sight — ”

“But, great guns, why didn’t you tell of it this morning?”

“Don’t ask me. I don’t know why. I couldn’t for some reason or other, but after to-night it seems easier.”

“It may be too late to do anything now.”

“It mustn’t be; that’s all!”

“What’ll we do?” Jimmy stopped, realizing that they were still walking in the direction that led away from home.

“I’ve thought that all out. You go home, I’ll go to the police station. There’s one not far from here and I’ll tell ‘em where I think they’ll find Alex.”

“Don’t you want me to go with you?”

“No, please, I’d rather do it alone. Your mother’ll be worried, too. I’ll be back soon if they’ll let me go. I hope I won’t have to see Alex caught.”

Almost before Jimmy realized it, Fred had turned and had run up a side street and was lost in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XX

### “ AMERICA ”

A BOUT an hour later Fred returned. Jimmy had gone to bed, but he was not asleep and the minute that Fred came into the room he sat up in bed with an excited, “ What happened? ”

Fred threw himself down into a chair wearily. “ They had already caught him,” he answered.

It was dark and Jimmy could not see Fred’s face, but he knew by his voice that he was sick at heart. He slid out of bed and went over to him and sat on the arm of the chair, his hand resting affectionately on Fred’s shoulder.

“ Well, that’s what you wanted, isn’t it? ” he said. “ Tell me about it.”

“ There isn’t anything to tell. They had caught him before I gave them the facts, been watching the house for a week, knew all about the bombs and everything.” Fred’s voice trailed off into silence.

“What did they say to you at the station?”  
Jimmy was all eager interest.

“They told me I was a little fool for not thinking the police would follow up a lead like that. Told me they’d not only been watching the house but me too, to see whether I was playing fair with them or not. Hope now they’re satisfied.” He stopped suddenly and there was a sound suspiciously like a sob in his throat ineffectively covered by a cough.

Jimmy slapped him on the back. “Cheer up, cheer up!” he cried.

“That’s easy to say. But Alex was half decent to me, you know, and I — I can’t help feeling sorry.” He was glad that the room was dark, for there were tears in his eyes.

The ensuing silence was broken by Jimmy.

“But don’t you see it’s worked out the very best way it could? You didn’t give Alex up to the police. He got caught himself and yet you were ready to do what was right. I should think you’d be darned happy thinking about it that way.”

They sat there in the quiet of the night for a few moments, thinking a great deal, talking only little.

To Fred everything seemed hopeless and uninteresting. He sensed, as never before, his complete loneliness. He realized the viciousness of the life of the men and women among whom he had lived, yet that life was all he knew, and he felt for it as one feels for old familiar things.

Cut loose from the little circle in which he had moved and from which were derived his ideas of the proprieties — and he felt that he was now cut loose — he did not know which way to turn. He would have to begin all over again. He would have to be shown and it was not his nature to enjoy being shown. He wanted to show others. He was a stranger in a strange land — no more so than formerly, but now he knew it.

“Say, I think we’ve sat here dreaming long enough,” Jimmy rose and stretched himself. “If you don’t get into your pajamas and into bed inside of three minutes I’m going to wrastle you. I think I could do you up.” Jimmy indeed seemed no mean figure as he stood there challengingly.

“Most likely you could,” Fred agreed.

“But wait until you get into Promise Hall gym — look at that muscle,” Jimmy thrust forward an arm,

“and that,” and a leg protruded from the loosely fitting pajama and pointed in his direction, “that comes from the horizontal bars and the track and — and the other things. Oh, we’ll show you down there at Promise Hall. But, say one minute’s gone; get busy.”

And Fred dispiritedly obeyed.

Promise Hall on the night of the pageant held a record-breaking audience. Mothers, fathers, friends — all were there. It was an audience for the most part of older folk as the younger element, to the number of three hundred odd, were in the play itself. Fred appreciated this fact as he glanced around the auditorium, and again he felt out of it. Why should he be in a fourth-row seat instead of behind the curtain with the others of his own age? The answer — he hadn’t been seeking one, but it came to him in a flash, made him stop and think. He wasn’t in there with the others, dressed up in all the toggery of which he caught occasional glimpses, simply because he had chosen not to be. It had been suggested that he join the pageant forces; Jimmy had urged him to. He had turned them all down.

It occurred to him then that perhaps this business of choosing what to do and what not to do was more important than he had ever supposed it was. Anyhow, he guessed he didn't want to be in the pageant. It probably was a tiresome old thing. Yes, he was glad he hadn't chosen to be in it.

But it wasn't tiresome, he found, when the curtain parted. Where the rehearsal of the night before had been entertaining for a moment and soon forgotten, there was something about this, something impressive, that made you hold your breath for fear of disturbing the reality of it. This story of America and of the evolution of American ideals, presented in brilliant colors, with the clash of contests and with the great figures of all time — Columbus, Washington, Lafayette, Lincoln, Grant, Roosevelt, Pershing, playing their parts — held him tense and absorbed from the start. Here were men who did things, men who were leaders. Here was the way they did them. It was a chronicle of great leadership, and leadership was a subject he loved to hear about.

The pageant came to a close with a symbolic spectacle. High on a golden dais and against a back-

ground of sky blue, stood America, a girl gowned in white, her loosely flowing hair caught together with bands of red, white, and blue. The dais was supported at each of its four corners by four stalwart young men representing Justice, Honor, Courage, and Loyalty.

This was the opening picture. America's face was turned toward the future, suggested by the rising sun, just a gleam of red in the far distance.

After a moment's pause, in which the beauty of the scene impressed itself upon the hushed audience, America's supporters, with rhythmic step, bore her slowly toward the East. America stood with eager eyes scanning the horizon, assurance that she could successfully cope with the unknown depicted in her erect and confident bearing.

Behind her swarmed the citizens of the world, who, as soon as America moved, showed themselves ready to follow in her direction and to acknowledge her leadership. Soon the stage was filled with them, their hands outstretched toward the being who typified for them freedom and happiness and growth. Upon this picture the curtain fell.

Fred had not understood it all as clearly as did

those who had taken part in the play. He had not had the benefit of the careful explanation of the pageant leaders, who had lost no opportunity to make plain the message of the piece. He did not appreciate, for example, the full significance of America's supporters — Justice, Honor, Courage, and Loyalty, nor see that had one of these fallen, America's progress would have been retarded. But he had out of it gathered that there were worthy ideals which upheld American life and there had been born in him the inspiration to know more of these ideals, what they were, what they would mean to him. He had been deeply moved by the scene, and while he had been physically held to his fourth-row seat he had in spirit been up there with the others holding out his hands and saying, "Show me the way."

## CHAPTER XXI

### BACK ON THE JOB

“WHATEVER happened to you last night, Fred?” Jimmy asked the next morning at breakfast. “I looked all over for you after the show. Didn’t you stay for the dancing?”

“Not for long. I waited until I saw you and Helen twirling around out in the middle of the floor and then I lit out. I am not strong for dancing myself.”

“Oh, we had a bully time. You should have stayed. There was lemonade and cakes, too.”

Fred greeted this announcement with silence, devoting all his attention to his toast and oatmeal.

“How did you like the pageant?” Mrs. Quigg asked.

“All right,” came the unenthusiastic reply.

“I thought it was more than all right,” Mrs. Quigg added. “It seemed to me wonderful.”

“Those of us who were in it had a good time,

anyhow," Jimmy said. "We'd vote for doing the thing right over again, work and all."

"Do you suppose you will do it over again? Something like that, I mean," with a little more show of interest on Fred's part.

"Surest thing you know. Maybe not a pageant, but we'll be getting up something. I think you ought to join. You aren't going to hang out with the O. B. L. crowd, are you?"

"I can't."

"You can't? Why?"

"All busted up."

"Did it go to pieces on account of that striking business?"

"Yes; that didn't work, and the fellows got sore and that was the end of it."

"It's a good thing," was Jimmy's dry comment.

"Oh, I don't know now. If that club had been managed right it wouldn't have been so bad."

"No, of course, if they'd had any sense behind it. Now, the Berrington Boys' Association, that's different. That stands for something, and look how it's booming. Football teams and parties and

everything. It's helping the fellows along a lot, too. See what it did for us! But in the O. B. L. each fellow was out for himself and himself only; no club action, no spirit."

"I agree with you, I agree with you," Fred said wearily; "but it could have been different."

This was apparently the thought that he took with him to the office and that he kept with him all during the morning. At noon, when he joined Jimmy for his stock-room luncheon, he broached the subject again.

"You know I'm wondering why we couldn't have something like Promise Hall down where the O. B. L. used to be."

Jimmy considered the question before replying. "I don't get you," he said at length.

"All I mean is, why couldn't a club to do things, to make things, say, be started down there? Have teachers and everything. I think we could get some of the old guys in it."

"It would cost a lot of money. You'd have to have tools." Jimmy was not usually skeptical, but he saw many obstacles in the way of this plan.

"The best thing for you to do is to come in to Promise Hall yourself." He stopped short, struck with an idea.

"I tell you what you could do," he went on. "You could form a club of O. B. L. gazabos, you seem to like them so much, and bring them all into Promise Hall. It's made up, you know, of different clubs. Most likely you could arrange to meet sometimes down in the O. B. L. room and have the teacher come there — except only when you wanted to use Promise Hall tools. You might start it that way, but I'd bet you'd soon be up at Promise Hall all of the time."

"I wonder if that could be done?" Fred showed a growing interest.

"Of course it could. Then you'd have a club that would be managed right and 'twould go. You'd have to choose some branch of work. I'm going in for manual training myself, cabinet-making section. Learn how to make fancy furniture, you know, by hand. But there are lots of other things. You could have your choice. Only you have to take one kind of work if you're going to get the gym and all that goes with it."

"And you think I could be the leader of this club?"

"Yes."

Silence while Jimmy finished his cake, then: "You come up to Promise Hall and join to-night. Tell 'em you want to start a new club, that you'll have a dozen members. That'll fix it. Then you'll have to work like the dickens to make 'em keep up to scratch."

"Oh, I can do that all right; I'll make 'em the best bunch yet."

"Then you'll join to-night?"

"I guess so."

"That's fine. We're going to have lots of sport, I can see."

"I'll give it a trial anyhow. I believe in trying anything once. If I don't like Promise Hall I can get out easy enough."

"You'll like it all right!" Jimmy nodded his head sagely.

His prophecy was more than fulfilled by the developments of the next few months which saw Fred's club organized and incorporated as a part of the

great settlement house and before long one of its most active and promising units.

That afternoon Jimmy was set to work on a printing job. "Now, be careful, young man," Bertrand jocularly advised him, "and get the right frames this time." He clapped him on the shoulder as he admonished him.

Jimmy looked up, a twinkle in his eyes answering one in Bertrand's.

"This little circular," he said, "is going to be the best printed little circular this department's put out. You just wait and see." He started the press and began to feed it the paper, his cheery whistle rising clear above the whir of the machinery.

"Feeling happy, old boy?" Bertrand called across at him. But Jimmy did not hear. Had he heard, his answer would have been strongly in the affirmative. Life was good, he knew, and a great contentment had come into his soul.

Helen Platt dropped in on him before the afternoon was out.

"I want to get," she said importantly, "five hundred circulars of the Bee Book." She asked

Bertrand for them, but she knew he would refer her to Jimmy.

"Here, you Quigg," he called out loudly. "Stop that infernal thing and get this young lady some circulars. Your bookkeeping is so elaborate I wouldn't know where to find 'em."

Jimmy consulted a memorandum book. "They're out here, Miss Platt," he said with a slight emphasis on the "Miss."

"Very well, Mr. Quigg," came the equally proper reply, as Helen followed him out of the office.

When they were out of sight of Bertrand they laughed together at their observance of the proprieties.

"I haven't seen you since last night," Jimmy observed.

"No, you haven't," Helen agreed. "Wasn't it wonderful? Say, have you been promoted?"

"Promoted? Me? No. Why?"

"I thought you said you were an office boy."

"I am."

"You don't look much like one to me, more like a printer's devil, I'd say."

"Here's your circulars. Are they too heavy for you to carry?"

"I should say not!" emphatically. She put them down on a chair and regarded them. A large white space on the top one was too great a temptation. She took her pencil and wrote on it:

### JIMMY QUIGG, OFFICE BOY.

She regarded it critically.

"You do so many things besides being an office boy," she said, and she took her pencil again and added something after his name.

"There," she said, extending the sheet to him.

"Jimmy Quigg, Office Boy, Etc.," he read. Then he looked up at her in a spirit of raillery.

"No, ma'am! I'm not an 'and so forth.' I'm an office boy, the best office boy that ever was, but I never have been, never will be, an 'and so forth'!"

"Very well!" With a suggestion of hauteur Helen scratched off the offending letters. She picked up the circulars and moved toward the doorway in the manner of a grande dame.

“What do you expect to be, anyway, Mr. Quigg?” she asked, pausing at the threshold.

“President some day, maybe. I — have hopes — hopes of a lot of things.”

Helen smiled. “Well, here’re my best wishes for the hopes, Jimmy,” she said — and fled.

THE END









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